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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

In Praise of Folly:

Portraits of the Fool and Trickster

in Medieval and Early Renaissance English Literature.

BY

© Raymond George Siemens

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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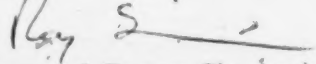

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Date: April 25, 1991.

Foolery, sir, does walk the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere.

Feste in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night

(3.1.37-8)

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool.

Viola, of Feste (3.1.53)

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IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF **Master of Arts**

Dr. R. J. S Grant

Dr. S. R. Reimer

Dr. R. J. d'Alquen

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ABSTRACT

Figures of folly and trickery in English literature have undergone a great deal of change in what may be called their early formative years. Evolving from mythological origins in the figure of the early trickster, Loki, whose actions incorporate both trickery and folly, the representation of characters of folly and trickery in Medieval religious literature, such as God, Christ and Satan, is one of dichotomization; elements of the trickster and fool are divided and separated among these figures much as good and evil figures are opposed to one another in Christian thought. The later Medieval writings involving secular figures, however, do not necessarily reflect the dichotomy between good and evil trickery or wise and foolish thinking. Instead, figures such as the fool and, later, King Parzival and the funny fool and trickster Tyl Eulenspiegel appear as characters who transcend these boundaries of dichotomy, paving the way for later characters of folly and trickery as seen in Shakespeare's Renaissance dramas and beyond.

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Introduction: In Praise of the Fool and Trickster

In the Weekly Essays section of an early edition of The Gentleman's Magazine, an article appears entitled "Of Wit, Humour, Madness, and Folly" recounting the tale of a French court gentleman who had little sense and thus was a poor conversationalist. Upon losing his sense altogether, however, the fool "became an ingenious and pleasant companion" (490) to those of the court; but when he regained his sense, he once again fell out of popularity. Commenting on this anecdote, the editor of the journal, Edward Cave writing under the pseudonym of Sylvanus Urban, states that it helps to prove the old adage "that all great wits have a tincture of madness" (490). Humorous tales such as these establish well the figure of the fool in our culture; scholar Anton Zijderveld comments, "If traditional society is viewed as an enchanted garden . . . folly should be seen as the main component of its flora" (1). Truly, as Shakespeare's Feste states, "Foolery . . . does walk the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere" (Twelfth Night 3.1.37-8) and, as one thinks of figures of folly, a great number come to mind from the traditional clown at a passing circus to predominant cartoon characters of the twentieth century such as Elmer Fudd and Bugs Bunny.

Perhaps the nature of the fool in society is prominent because of an unquenchable thirst for laughter and comic relief from day-to-day life. The fool is a figure who inspires laughter, not only because of his character and wit, but also because he uses his character and wit upon others--beguiling them with what

appears to be meaningless babble, making them the brunt of his jokes, or tricking them in some way or another--often proving them more the fool than the fool himself. On his role as the fool, the character Jack Point, in W. S. Gilbert's nineteenth-century operetta The Yeoman of the Guard, sings as follows:

> I've jibe and joke
> And quip and crank
> For lowly folk
> And men of rank.
> I ply my craft
> And know no fear,
> But aim my shaft
> At prince and peer. (478)

The true fool's folly knows no boundaries, and high and low alike are victims of his wit and actions.

Furthermore, as stated by the editor of The Gentleman's Magazine, often great folly will contain great wit and, in this way, the fool is also an ironic figure of wisdom. Jack Point also comments on this aspect of his role:

> I can teach you with a quip, if I've a mind;
> I can trick you into learning with a laugh;
> Oh, winnow all my folly, and you'll find
> A grain or two of truth among the chaff. (478)

One sees Feste, too, in this way; he is not Olivia's fool but, rather, "her corrupter of words" (3.1.34-5), and the bits of wisdom that he offers, likewise, are corrupted. His dialogue on wit and folly shows keen insight, but his employment of the two attributes in his discussion of them makes his talk more nonsensical than sensible:

> Wit, an't be thy will, put me into good fooling.
> Those wits that think they have thee do very oft prove fools, and I that am sure I lack thee may pass for a wise man. For what says Quinapalus?
> "Better a witty fool than a foolish wit."
> (Shakespeare 1.5.29-33)

Another aspect of Feste's character, however, is that he appears to be part trickster as well as fool. In his pursuit of folly and humorous distraction, Feste uses language and disguise to play tricks and, especially, to deceive the vain Malvolio. In many other laughter-inspiring characters of literature, it is a combination of elements of both folly and trickery in their characters which makes them so entertaining; "The fool and the trickster," states Paul Williams, "far from having utterly separate identities, resemble each other to a marked degree" (The Fool and the Trickster 1),

In the book, The Trickster, Carl Jung writes as follows in a chapter entitled "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure":

> He is obviously a 'psychologem,' an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity. In his clearest manifestations he is a faithful copy of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level. (200)

Just as is the trickster, the fool is also a literary and psychological archetype. Because their identities are relatively intermingled, it is difficult to establish explicitly the differences between the two characters as seen at the time of Shakespeare and beyond into the modern day; however, if one looks at the trickster's early origins in Germanic mythology and the fool, as he begins to

appear in Anglo-Saxon Christian writing, it is apparent that the two figures certainly did not start as similar characters.

Holding these figures to their names' dictionary definitions, the fool is merely "a silly person, a jester" (Skeat 215) and the trickster is solely one who participates in "stratagem[s], clever contrivance[s]" (Skeat 660); however, their true roles are perhaps better denoted by their names' etymological roots.[1] Skeat links "fool" with the Latin "follis, a pair of bellows, [a] wind-bag" and relates his name further to the word "flatulent" (215) while Kaiser comments upon the "genital suggestion" of "follis" (516). In their exposition, each seems to link the fool somehow with non-intellectual, animal gratification, a gratification of the senses rather than that of the intellect; in a similar vein, Kaiser comments that the fool is "instructed only by his senses and his intuition and seek[s] only self-gratification" (516). These two place the fool in the same territory as Jung places the trickster, "whose psyche has hardly left the animal level" (200).

Though Skeat states that "trick" is not likely directly descended from the Middle English "trichen, to deceive, cozen" (660), it does seem quite close in meaning. Following this word "trichen" leads one to the Old French words – "tricher" and "trecher," meaning "treachery"; and these words, too, are not unrelated in this context, especially for one who is the victim of trickery. More correctly, Skeat links "trick" directly to the Dutch "trek" and "streek, a trick, a prank." Interestingly, in his discussion of the meaning of "trek," Skeat translates

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1 See also the Oxford English Dictionary s. v. "fool" and "trick."

the passage "de kap trekken" as meaning both "to play tricks" and to "play the fool" (660), with emphasis on the headgear of the fool or trickster figure. To some degree, then, folly and trickery are linked, at least at the level of translation. Like Jung and Skeat before, Kaiser relates a similar thought; in his discussion of the fool's origins, he connects the characters of trickery--"scurrilous buffoons and outrageous pranksters" engaged in jests and acts of roguery (517)--with the figure of the fool as well. In this one way of many, the fool and trickster can be seen as linked. While, etymologically, the connection could be more direct, from discussion of the etymological roots of their names, their functions appear directly related. The fool, driven by his senses and intuition, is quite similar to buffoons and pranksters, involved in jests and deceptions, in that they all act wholly in their own animal-level interests.

Though linked at this level and others, however, figures of folly and trickery are placed quite differently in their early origins. The figure of the fool originally was seen as opposite to figures of wisdom, and was treated more as a character of shame than one of laughter and entertainment. Unlike the fool, the early mythological trickster, Loki, seems to possess both elements of humorous folly in his dealings and, unlike some later incarnations of the trickster, a very dark and diabolical side. Ultimately, however, both figures have evolved towards one another and, as Jung's theory of archetypes might suggest, into what Ron Messer calls "culture heroes" (310), figures who have gained a great degree of acceptance and support in the literature and lives of many people.

1. Mythological Origins of the Trickster:

The Germanic God Loki

The tales of most mythologies world-wide include, at least to some degree, the figure of the trickster. The Greek Prometheûs, a "great rebel against injustice and the authority of power" (Hamilton 73) who "unrepentingly def[ies] the laws of the Olympians though . . . never [is] successful in the endeavour" (Koepping 197), the Irish-Celtic Bricriu, who, nicknamed "Poison-tongue," is "a deviser and initiator of plans . . . [and] a mischief-maker" (Mandel 44), Wakdjunkaga, the "funny foolish prankster" (Koepping 207) of Winnebago Indian mythology, and the tribal African Anansi, whose form is that of a spider, all share deeply-rooted attributes though their cultures have existed in relative isolation from each other.[2] Whether the trickster's wide representation stems from a common prehistoric mythology which all humankind once shared, from the spread of mythological tales from one culture to another or, as Jung suggests, from his being an archetype emerging separately in each culture, the similarities between these figures in all cultures run deep. With little exception, the characteristics of the above trickster figures can also be seen in the character of the Germanic trickster figure, Loki.

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[2] Ellis Davidson (180-1) comments upon Loki and his ties to traditional mythological trickster figures.

Though Loki is most popularly a specifically Scandinavian figure and not one of the more deeply-rooted figures of common Germanic mythology, the extent of his influence can be seen in the prominence of his name, which appears at least as often as those of Oðin or Thor in the sagas (Guirand 266) and, as H. R. Ellis Davidson mentions, in the way in which he is "the chief actor in the most amusing stories, and the motivating force in a large number of plots" (176). Furthermore, his exploits are found, pictorially, on carved stones in the British Isles from Viking days (Mandel 39). Because of Loki's prominence in northern myths, Ellis Davidson further comments that "Loki is perhaps the most outstanding character among the northern gods" (176). He, like Prometheus, is a defier of authority, and is not always as successful in his plots as he could be. Like Bricriu, Loki the mischiefmonger[3] possesses a poison-tongue and, like Wakdjunkaga, is at times a foolish prankster. In this vein, Snorri Sturluson comments upon the attributes of Loki in "Gylfaginning" (The Deluding of Gylphi):

> Loki er fríðr ok fagr sýnum, illr í skaplyndi, mjök fjölbreytinn at háttum. Hann hafði þá speki um fram aðra menn, er slægð heitr, ok vélar til allra hluta. Hann kom ásum jafnan í fullt vandræði, ok oft leysti hann þá með vélræðum.
>
> (Jónsson, Edda: Snorra Sturlusonar 46)

> Loki is handsome and fair of face, but has an evil disposition and is very changeable of mood. He excel[ls] all men in the art of cunning, and he always cheats. He [is] continually involving the Æsir in great difficulties and he often help[s] them out again by guile. (Young 55)

---

3 Loki is referred to as "rógbera" (Jónsson, Edda: Snorra Sturlusonar 55).

It is these qualities which Loki shares with trickster figures world-wide that set him apart from the other figures of Germanic mythology. He has not the authority of Oðin nor the power of Thor, yet at times he befriends them both and occasionally attempts to outwit them. Though he is closely associated with these two strong figures of goodness in northern legend--he and Oðin are blood-brothers,[4] and Loki is a companion of Thor in many adventures--his own character runs counter to those of Oðin and Thor. Jerold Frakes notes this of Loki and his function:

> He is a thief, a trickster, a demon, a foulmouthed party-guest, and the ultimate nemesis of the gods. (485)

Truly, he is the opposite of Oðin and Thor, but the contrasts which exist between the two gods and Loki exist within Loki's own character as well. While he is a thief, he is also a restorer of property, such as in the story "Þrymskviða" (The Lay of Thrym) from the Elder Edda where Loki helps Thor recover his hammer from the giant Thrym's hiding spot. It is undeniable that Loki is a trickster, but he tricks for both his own selfish causes and, conversely, also for the good of Asgarð, home of the Gods.

This duality in his personality and actions, a predominant characteristic of the trickster figure, is perhaps seen with greatest contrast in Loki's origin and eventual end. His father is Fárbauti the giant, "who by striking gave birth to

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[4] Refer to Jónsson's Sæmundar-Edda (146, st. 9) where Loki reminds Oðin of their early bonds: "Mantu þat, Óðinn, / er vit í árdaga / blendum blóði saman?" Taylor translates this passage as follows: "Remember, Odin, in the olden days / What blood-brothers we were" (134).

fire" (Guirand 266), and his mother is Laufey, "the wooded isle" (266). A significant point about his parents is that their union of conception roughly equates, etymologically, to a formation of Loki's role as expressed by his own name; the spark, Fárbauti, and the tinder, Laufey, together conceive a son whose name is closely related to a Germanic root meaning flame, "logi" (Ellis Davidson 180). Like Prometheus, then, Loki is a bringer of fire. The fire Loki brings in his conception, however, is also the fire he uses to threaten Aegir and the other gods in "Lokasenna" (Loki's Flyting):

> Öl gerðir þu, Ægir
> en þú aldri munt
> síðan sumbl of gera;
> eiga þín öll,
> er hér inni er,
> leiki yfir logi
> ok brenni þér á baki!
> (Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 162; st. 65)

> Ale you have brewed, Aegir, but never
> Will you give a feast again:
> My flames play over all you possess,
> Already they burn your back. (Taylor 143)

This fire, of course, plays a large part in "Ragnarok" (Twilight of the Gods) as reported in "Völuspá" (Song of the Sybil):

> Sól tér sortna
> sígr fold í mar,
> hverfa af himni
> hiðar stjörnur;
> geisar eimi
> ok aldrnari,
> leikr hár hiti
> við himin sjalfan.
> (Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 19; st. 57)

Earth sinks into the sea, the sun turns black,
Cast down from Heaven are the hot stars,
Fumes reek, into flames burst,
The sky itself is scorched with fire.
(Taylor 152)

Here, Loki plays a major part in ending the rule of the gods by ushering in the apocalyptic destruction as helmsman of Nagflar, the ship from the underworld:

Kjóll ferr austan,
koma munu Múspells
of lög lýðir,
en Loki stýrir;
fara fíflmegir
með freka allir,
þeim er bróðir
Býleists í för.
(Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 17; st. 51)

[Nagflar] Sails out from the east, at its helm Loki,
With the children of darkness, the doom-bringers,
Offspring of monsters, allies of the Wolf,
All who Byleist's Brother follow . . .
(Taylor 151)

The offspring of Loki's child Fenrir, Skoll and Hati, devour the sun and moon, and Fenrir himself swallows Oðin. In this way, Byleist's Brother, Loki, the bringer of fire to the world of the northern gods, also brings apocalypse, destroying their realm.

It is this type of mixture of which Frederic Amory speaks when referring to the formation of the trickster figure in all mythologies. This figure in general, as with Loki specifically, "can be conclusively derived from a duality of heroism and evil-doing, in between which trickery and/or folly is the ambivalent means" (Amory 19). While Loki's comedic folly has not yet been discussed and his

heroic side has only briefly been dealt with, one can still view "Ragnarok" as the ultimate example of evil-doing and also see it as Loki's final trick. Also, unlike the majority of his other efforts, the apocalypse is as thoroughly successful as was Loki's prophecy. However, it is questionable whether or not Loki's act of vengeance is as successful as he might have wanted it to be, considering that it would be more within the character of the trickster, even in the event of an apocalypse he is instrumental in bringing about, to try to outsmart the apocalypse itself rather than perish within it.

While these contrasts within Loki himself have larger effects in "Ragnarok" in that his actions lead not only to his own end but also to the demise of the gods themselves, Loki's own paradoxical nature also helps to reflect the paradoxical nature in all beings, including the gods. Because the trickster is essentially a duality in himself, Klaus-Peter Koepping suggests that the trickster serves as "a signpost pointing out these paradoxes, bringing them to the conscious mind, which is then able--in the most favourable cases--to laugh about them (resignedly or defiantly or both at the same time)" (197). Thus it is Loki's duality which leads not only to destruction but also to constructive, perhaps humorous, insight. In this vein, while in the terms of literary structure an apocalypse is not a comedic end, the story of "Völuspá" does have a comedic ending, as the terrifying destruction which Loki begins leads to a rebirth. The Sybil recounts:

Sér hon upp koma
öðru sinni
jörð ór ægi
iðjagræna.
(Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 20; st. 59)

[She sees] the earth rising a second time
Out of the foam, fair and green. (Taylor 152)

Given that his mischief leads to the re-birth of the world, perhaps it is easier to laugh at Loki, especially in light of his more humorous adventures.

In terms of revealing the paradoxes of the gods, however, one finds that Loki's revelations of the gods' characters are insightful. Such revelations are found in "Lokasenna" where Loki, after being driven away into the woods by the gods for murdering the server Fimafeng, returns to Aegir's hall where the gods are drinking and, upon protesting for and being granted re-entry, points out the gods' own hypocrisies. Oðin, the "ruler of heaven and earth,"[5] is accused by Loki of weak judgement:

Þegi þú, Óðinn,
þú kunnir aldregi
deila víg með verum;
oft þú gaft,
þeim er þú gefa skyldir-a,
inum slævurum sigr.
(Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 150; st. 22)

Enough, Odin! You have never been
A just judge of warriors:
You have often allowed, as allow you should not,
Faint-hearted warriors to win. (Taylor 136)

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5 Refer to Snorri's passage which discusses the powers of Oðin and his brothers: "munu vera stýrandi himins ok jarðar" (Jónsson, Edda: Snorra Sturlusonar 17). The translation is from Young (34).

Loki further accuses Oðin of "play[ing] a woman's part,"[6] and Oðin's wife Frigg (the mother of all the inhabitants of Asgarð (Young 37) and, hence, a symbol of fertility) of sexual promiscuity with her husband's brothers:

> Þegi þú, Frigg,
> þú ert Fjögyns mær
> ok hefr æ vergjörn verit,
> er þá Véa ok Vilja
> léztu þér, Viðris kvæn,
> báða í baðm of tekit.
> (Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 151; st. 26)

> Enough Frigg! You are Fjörgyn's daughter
> And have ever played the whore:
> Both Ve and Vili, Vidrir's wife,
> You allowed to lie with you. (Taylor 137)

As one might expect in a character with Loki's duality, by accusing the gods of their own hypocrisy he makes himself vulnerable for rebuttal about his own. Oðin immediately comments that Loki also is quite promiscuous with both sexes. Furthermore, as he drunkenly assaults the gods with insults, Loki draws into question his own sense of judgement.

As is illustrated by his ill-equipped attack on the gods, Loki's function here is much like Prometheus' function in Greek mythology. Loki is man's symbol of struggle against the gods and, hence, against authority in general. While apparently working against the authoritative entities, Loki actually works for them, for the endeavour of striving against authority is necessary for authority to exist in the first place (Koepping 197). In this way, by being a figure who

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[6] Loki states: "ok hugða ek þat args aðal" (Jónsson, Eddukvæði 150; st. 24). The translation in text is Taylor's (137).

constantly challenges the authority of the gods, he provides not only insight into the powers of the northern peoples' gods, but also is a character against whom the people could see those powers tested.

Though Loki's harmonizing of opposites within himself is perhaps ironic[7]--this is furthered by his apparent inverted function in the mythical pantheon--Koepping maintains:

> The qualities of the trickster personality . . . comprise not the opposition to any specific symbolic code that distinguishes and hierarchically classifies good and bad, high and low, power and submission, but rather the one in the other, the complementarity of symbols in a given classificatory scheme. (198)

Thus, the trickster figure, and the figure of Loki specifically, allowed the northern people to see in larger figures than themselves--in this case Loki and the northern gods--aspects of both extremes of being. This is to say that, in the character of Loki himself and in those parts of the gods' characters which he helps reveal, the northern peoples could see the elements of badness in good figures or actions, the elements of lowness in those of lofty position, the power which can be found in submission, and so forth. Loki, the trickster figure, acts as a catalyst for this. His own hypocrisies are blatant enough that one can question and laugh at his bouts of apparent virtuosity and, though it usually appears that he will emerge superior by his craftiness, the audience often sees him submitting to penalties because his plots run awry. In this way, and by using his powers of craftiness in thought and

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[7] Amory (7) states of the trickster that "His harmonizing of opposites in himself is very like something which we would call irony."

language and his ability to alter his shape, Loki adds humour and humility to the world of the northern gods as no other figure does.

Also present alongside his role as exposer of the northern gods' hypocrisies is Loki's function as one who adds laughter and humour to the Nordic tales. Just as the gods' hypocrisies would make them more human in the eyes of their pagan followers, so too does the gods' involvement in humorous episodes humanize their characters. Contiguous with the humanizing aspect of laughter in the Eddas, one must also consider the vital role that humour itself plays in all societies. As Aldous Huxley puts it:

> Laughter clears the air as nothing else can do; it is good for us, every now and then, to see our ideals laughed at, our conception of nobility caricatured; it is good for solemnity's nose to be tweaked, for human pomposity to be made to look ridiculous.

So, too, is it with the worlds of both gods and men. Loki scoffs at the ideals of the Æsir and shows both the gods and himself as humorously ridiculous at times. Because the people can laugh at and along with the gods they worship, they are able to share a closer affinity with them, and in the Eddas Loki is the character who allows this to happen.

The ability to manipulate language and logic through crafty thinking is another characteristic which Loki shares with all mythological tricksters. In this case, he can be compared to the Irish-Celtic trickster Bricriu, who like Loki has a "poison-tongue," is a mischief-maker, and prefers battles of wit over physical battles (Mandel 44). These three characteristics are well pronounced in

"Lokasenna" where Loki exhibits such a command of language and mind that he is successfully able to exchange accusations with all the gods.

Loki's command of language and his aforementioned function as a laughter-inspiring character are quite related. Etymologically speaking, the role of the poet seems inextricably tied to a certain type of humour. In this regard, Wrenn notes the connection of the Anglo-Saxon word for poet "scop" with the Old Norse "skop" and Old High German "scoph," meaning "mockery" (36). In "Lokasenna," Loki is not only using his powers of language and logic to accuse the gods, he is using them also to perform this aspect of the role of the poet; he is mocking them. Furthermore, though he is not known as a poet, Loki's craftiness in language is contrasted with that of Bragi, the northern god of poetry who is renowned for his wisdom and eloquence:

> Bragi heitir einn. Hann er ágætr at speki ok mest at málsnilld ok orðfimi. (Jónsson, Edda: Snorra Sturlusonar 43).
>
> One [god] is called Bragi. He is famous for wisdom and most of all for eloquence and skill with words. (Young 53-4)

Loki's skill is strong enough that Bragi chooses not to exchange words with Loki but, rather, offers Loki tribute in order not to offend the gods:

> Mar ok mæki
> gef ek þér míns féar,
> ok bætir þér svá baugi Bragi,
> síðr þú ásum
> öfund of gjaldir,
> grem þú eigi goð at þér.
> (Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 147; st. 12)

I will give you a mare, a mace also,
And, to better the bargain, a ring,
To refrain, Loki, from malicious words,
Inciting the gods against you. (Taylor 135)

Loki, present in Aegir's hall to taunt and mock the gods for mischief's sake, spares no one with his vile tongue. He also does not stop at mockery; he threatens Bragi with violence:

Snjallr ertu í sessi,
skal-at-tu svá gera,
Bragi bekkskrautuðr;
vega þú gakk
ef þú vreiðr séir;
hyggsk vætr hvatr fyrir.
(Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 148; st. 15)

Boldly you speak, less boldly you act,
Bragi, the bench-ornament:
If you are angry, come out and fight,
A hero should feel no fear. (Taylor 135)

However, Loki is aware of the limits of his mocking accusations. He does not make the same challenge to Thor, nor does he initially acknowledge Thor's repeated threats to him:

Þegi þú, rög vættr,
þér skal minn þrúðhamarr,
Mjöllnir, mál fyrnema.
(Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 160-1;
sts. 57, 59, 61, 63)

Be silent and grovel, or my great hammer
Mjöllnir shall shut your mouth.
(Taylor 142-3)

Loki continually denigrates Thor's physical power, especially in his prediction that in the future Thor's bravery will not be so prominent:

En þá þorir þú ekki,
er þú skalt við ulfinn vega,
ok svelgr hann allan Sigföður.
(Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 160; st. 58)

Less bold will you be when you battle with Fenris
And he swallows Oðin whole. (Taylor 142)

It is Thor, however, who is the last god Loki verbally abuses before condemning all the gods with an apocalyptic prediction. Heeding Thor's warning, Loki states to him:

Kvað ek fyr ásum,
kvað ek fyr ása sonum,
þats mik hvatti hugr;
en fyr þér einum
mun ek út ganga,
því at ek veit, at þú vegr.
(Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 162; st. 64)

I have said to gods and the sons of gods
What my mind was amused to say:
But now I shall go, for I know your rages,
With Thor I'm afraid to fight. (Taylor 143)

Apparently, Loki's love for a battle of wits with all the gods is not excelled by his love for a physical battle with Thor, who would certainly be victorious.

Though Loki's apparent logic and craftiness might lead hearers of his tales initially to believe that he could emerge victorious in all his pursuits Loki's designs, like those of Bricriu, often end not with him as victor but, rather, with him in a compromising position as a result of his actions. A humorous example of this is told by Snorri in the tale where the origins of Sif's golden hair is

explained.[8] As a joke, Loki cuts off all the hair of Thor's wife, Sif. To appease Thor, who would have severely beaten him, Loki promises to persuade the dark elves to make hair of gold for Sif. Instead of being satisfied with escaping Thor's rage--after the sons of Ivaldi make the hair, and also the ship Skíðblaðnir and the spear Gungnir--Loki in his craftiness wagers his own head with the dwarf Brokk that Brokk's brother, Eitri, cannot make treasures as fine as those made by the sons of Ivaldi. Though Loki tries to inhibit Eitri's and Brokk's work by changing his shape to that of a fly[9] and stinging them, they succeed in producing what Oðin, Thor, and Frey judge to be better treasures: the ring Draupnir, the boar and, especially, Thor's hammer Mjöllnir. Loki then tries three times to escape paying his wager; first, Loki pleads with the dwarf to redeem his head, but the dwarf declines; then, Loki flees, but is brought back by Thor; lastly, when the dwarf wants to cut off Loki's head, Loki replies that he already has a claim on his head, but not on his neck. As an appropriate punishment for Loki, and perhaps upset by Loki's false talk, the dwarf sews Loki's mouth shut with a thong. Though through his craftiness Loki manages to get himself into trouble, he cannot rely upon his crafty mind to free him successfully from the consequences of his actions. In this way, one sees Loki the trickster, as Zijderveld comments, "in the literary tradition of many civilizations . . . acting like a kind of folk hero

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[8] Young (108-10). All references are from this edition.

[9] While this is not explicitly stated in the text, given Loki's shape-shifting abilities and desire to succeed in wagers, it is implicit that the fly is actually Loki.

who ridicules the values and violates the norms of his society in playful banter" (10); his violation of these norms, however, rarely occur without repercussions towards himself.

It is in the playful banter of Loki's deal-making and the ridiculing of values in Loki's action that one finds humour and laughter. The audience revels in his greedy plots, hoping he succeeds, all the while fully knowing that success for Loki is unlikely; one laughs at his fitting and deserved punishments. He pits himself against the unmeasurable power of the gods and one cheers him for it, but also knows that the gods must triumph. In this way, Loki is not only a serious figure, but also a comic figure who inspires laughter and jeering. On this, Siegfried Mandel comments as follows:

> The comic hero often draws laughter because of his cowardice, while the trickster draws laughter because of a foolhardy bravado that threatens his own safety. (37)

Though Loki is comic in some ways, especially in the cowardice which Mandel points out, it is Loki's foolhardy bravado which is yet another source in which one can find a type of laughter. It is obvious that he is doomed to fail, but he

possesses a spirit which denies[10] or refuses to accept that knowledge; and though he is repeatedly caught and punished, he continues to revel in trickery.

As is seen in the tale of Sif's hair, Loki relies not only upon his own sense of craftiness but also on his ability to change his shape in order to further his ends. In the aforementioned tale, he becomes a fly to inhibit, though unsuccessfully, the work of the dwarves so that he has a better chance of winning the wager. This use of disguise and the ability to change outer shape is another common trait of tricksters world-wide, and in Loki it is an aspect of his abilities that is seen quite often. To bring about Baldr's death, Loki first disguises himself as an old woman to ask Frigg, Baldr's mother, about her son's weaknesses. Later, when all things must weep for Baldr to free him from the underworld, Loki, disguised as the giantess Thökk, refuses to weep; thus, Baldr is not released. After this, Loki goes into hiding as a salmon by the waterfall of Frånang to escape the wrath of the Æsir. Furthermore, in the earlier tale "Þrymskviða," Loki flies as a bird to investigate the disappearance of Thor's hammer, and then Thor,

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10 Consider, tangentially, the character of Mephistopheles in Goethe's Faust, who is "the Spirit which always denies" (Goethe 1.164). This further associates the characteristics of Loki with that of Satan by the common elements of the trickster in their characters, specifically that of their presence as destructive forces; Mephistopheles continues:

> . . . whatever has a beginning
> Deserves to have an undoing;
> It would be better if nothing began at all.
> Thus, everything that you call
> Sin, destruction, Evil in short
> Is my own element, my resort. (1.165-70)

in disguise as Freyja, and Loki as his handmaid together trick Thrym into returning Mjöllnir right into Thor's lap.

In these occurrences of his shape-shifting Loki can be seen using his power for purposes of both good, as in the case of returning Thor's hammer, and evil, as in the murdering of Baldr. However, where Loki is most interesting, and most humorous, in his use of this power is when he must employ it to save himself as well as the gods. Specifically, this is seen in the story where the existence of Sleipnir, Oðin's horse, is explained. In the story told by Snorri (Young 66-8), the gods seek to make the stronghold Valhalla, and strike a bargain with a master mason to construct this stronghold within a single winter. If he is successful, his reward will be Freyja as his bride and possession of the sun and moon; if he is unsuccessful, he will receive no reward and the stronghold will still be occupied by the gods. When the builder asks for the help of his horse, Svaðilfari, Loki advises the gods to allow this. Already the gods are worried, for the horse is large and does a great deal of work. Three days before summer, when the work looks likely to be completed on time, the gods turn to Loki, lay violent hands upon him, and say that he deserves an evil death if he does not develop a plan whereby the builder will lose his wages.[11] Loki, fearing the gods' actions, then transforms himself into a mare and lures Svaðilfari away from his work and into the woods.

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11 Young (67) is paraphrased. Young translates the passage found in Jónsson (Edda: Snorra Sturlusonar 61), which reads:

> En þat kom ásamt með öllum, at þessu myndi ráðit hafa sá, er flestu illu ræðr, Loki Laufeyjarson, ok kváðu hann verðan ills dauða, ef eigi hitti hann ráð til, at smiðrinn væri af kaupinu, ok veittu Loka atgöngu.

Without his horse, the builder cannot complete work on time and the gods do not have to give the builder his reward.

While this story is comical by itself, the ending of the story adds further to the laughter the northern peoples' experience through the character of Loki. The trick has been successful, the gods keep Freyja, the sun, and the moon, and Loki is freed from the gods' death threats. However, Loki is not freed from his involvement in deception that easily, as Snorri tells:

> En Loki hafði þá ferð haft til Svaðilfara, at nökkuru síðar bar hann fyl. Þat var grátt ok hafði átta fætr, ok er sá hestr beztr með goðum ok mönnum. (Jónsson, Edda: Snorra Sturlusonar 62)
>
> Loki, however, had [had] such dealings with Svaðilfari that some time later he bore a foal. It was grey and had eight legs, and amongst gods and men that horse is the best. (Young 68)

In this tale, Loki does service to the term shape-shifter, changing not only size and shape but sex also, and he performs his "woman's part," as Oðin comments in "Lokasenna," to its fruition. Loki, in the tale of Svaðilfari, is a hero to the gods; yet, because of Loki's help the gods are victorious. Loki, however, is seen as foolish due to the extent to which he will go in trickery and the price he will pay for his involvement. In this vein, Amory comments as follows in a discussion of the character of Loki:

> In sum, the mythical trickster god was in his character make-up one part hero (saviour or benefactor) and two parts fool or knave. (18)

In the comic stories about him, Loki's folly and knavery provide both humour for the audience and insight into the world of the gods; however, in the less comic

stories, such as "Lokasenna," and "Völuspá," he is neither hero nor fool, but a dangerous, destructive force not to be taken lightly.

Loki, then, is a character of duality. He is aligned with both good and evil, and, though he works his trickery for both ends, his allegiance lies in himself and in his tools: trickery and deception. Though he goes to great lengths to help Thor recapture the hammer from Thrym, Loki does not hesitate later to deliver Thor to Geirröd to save himself. Such a character as Loki, perhaps tolerated by the gods only because of his past allegiances with Oðin and Thor and because of his occasional usefulness, is left quite alone because of his actions. Though he is highly sociable in that he has much involvement with other members of Germanic mythology (Ellis Davidson 177), he is represented as one outside the circle of the gods, especially as "Ragnarok" approaches, because he exists outside societal constraints--and is continually trying to define the constraint of authority which the gods provide. It is this fringe-element of his character that perhaps ensures his survival and gives him, until he commits Baldr's murder and turns the gods against him in "Lokasenna," virtually free reign in both word and deed.

Thus, it is in the realm of the trickster that Loki is delineated. His devious actions and poisonous words are of utmost importance to his character:

> [they] touch on the sacredness of rules . . . the breaking of boundaries of social taboos . . . the mysteries of creation and transformation powers . . . the destructive forces that become creative and creative urges that turn to dust.
>
> (Koepping 203)

He is at once a character of comedy and tragedy. He is the bringer of fire and laughter, but also the destroyer of the Æsir. He is unified by his duality, and exists, by being a paradox himself, as a symbol of hypocrisy in both the gods and humans alike.

Though the paradoxical characteristics of Loki, taking his representation as seen throughout the tales, are approximately equally divided between good and evil, his alignment in the Nordic tales shifts from his earlier adventures to his later ones. Although overall, as Ellis Davidson comments in reference to the trickster, "the Loki of Snorri's tales is a mischievous one rather than a wicked being" (177), she also states that "by the late Viking age the wicked and dangerous side of his character seems to have been strengthened by comparison with the Christian Devil" (176). The later stories involving Loki in both Eddas portray him as a diabolical force not only in reference to his association with the Devil, but also in the function which, etymologically, would be assigned to one who is diabolical; from the Greek word for Satan, διάβολος, διά contains the element of action which works "through [or] across" something and βάλλω connotes the action of "throw[ing] a hit" (Liddel 297). Truly, Loki often casts plots which cross the fortunes of the Æsir for his own benefit and gain. Furthermore, Alan Ross (145) links διάβολος with διαβάλλω, a verb which means "to throw over, to slander, misrepresent, to deceive of false accounts" (Liddel 297); Loki is also a deceiver, as can be seen in the tale of Sif's hair, and

a slanderer,[12] and is seen in Lokasenna. Continuing in this vein, the same type of etymological connections which associate his name with the Germanic root for fire, "logi," and link him with Prometheus also connect him to the Latin "lux," meaning "light," and, more importantly, to Lucifer, "the light bearer" (Branston, Gods of the North 166).

Certainly, in the earlier tales when he is blood-brother to Oðin and constant companion of Thor, Loki is more associated with the figures of good in the Nordic world. However, as the "Ragnarok" approaches, Loki appears more evil than good in his allegiances, and his actions seem more in the realm of danger than in that of folly. He is not, by the end of the Elder Edda, the figure who helps Thor outsmart the giant Thrym, but is, rather, a threatening and abusive force among the northern gods, interrupting their ale-drinking with insults and bringing apocalypse to their realm. On this comparison of Loki's earlier, more innocent exploits which associate him with Thor and Oðin, and his later, more diabolical endeavors which associate him with the Devil, Mandel comments as follows:

> It may be that the earliest stories regard Loki as a master thief and trickster of Indo-European tradition, while later stories add entertaining touches and Christian--Celtic and Old English--sources give him diabolical characteristics. (39)

It is his later deeds, seen especially in "Lokasenna" and the "Völuspá," that strengthen this connection between Loki and Devil.

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[12] Richard Wagner, in scene 2 of Das Rheingold, links Loki with slander and deceit by punning "Loge" (Loki) with "lüge," meaning "liar" and "falsifier."

As pagans, the northern peoples when they held belief in the Nordic gods would probably not have been aware of Christian notions of the Devil, and if they had been so aware the pagans would likely have given these notions the same type of consideration given by Christians to figures of pagan mythology. As such, strong elements of the Christian Devil would not be apparent in Loki's character from the pagan's perception, unless efforts were made by Christians to draw these comparisons. Not surprisingly, Loki's main attributes are of the trickster of the non-Christian, Germanic tradition. He possesses a strange duality in his character which is akin to that of tribal tricksters world-wide; Loki is not an incarnation of pure evil, as some views present the Devil, but is rather a union of the attributes of both good and evil.

One theory of Loki's later adoption of attributes more akin to those of the Christian Devil holds that the Eddas' Christian author was deliberately emphasizing the baseness of the gods by Christian standards. Phillip Anderson comments on this aspect of the Eddas' authorship:

> To the thirteenth-century reader [the Elder Edda] would have had an antiquarian interest, since Scandinavia had been Christian for quite some time. If the poet wrote at a time when Christianity was already the state religion, it might at first seem that he [was] interested in emphasizing the crude behaviour ascribed to the pagan gods by the old myths, in order to pave the way for an unfavourable comparison of the old religion to Christianity. (215)

While this theory, as Anderson states, is rejected by Georges Dumézil, the theory is important in that it emphasizes the effect of Christianity on the myths of the northern people. It does seem probable that the final authors of both Eddas,

though they re-tell a collection of age-old stories, may have tainted the myths of the older gods with elements of the new theological movement in northern Europe. This can be supported, albeit weakly, in that final authorship of the prime northern myths, as seen in Snorri's work of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (Young 10) and earlier in the Elder Edda, falls well within the period of Christian conversion efforts in Scandinavian Europe and Iceland.[13]

Conversely, as a part of the Christian conversion of northern Europe, it is very probable that elements of pagan mythology, such as those found in the character of Loki, were adopted into the characters of more Christian figures;[14] such is the case with one of Loki's victims, Baldr, whose character sees strong comparison with that of Christ. As a part of this process, Loki is a pagan figure who appears to have met with this metamorphosing as well. From his representation in the Scandinavian Eddas, an Anglo-Saxon portrayal of one such occurrence is found in the parallels which exist between the tale of Loki's binding, after the gods catch him by the waterfall of Frånang and before he leads elements of the underworld to battle with the gods, and the emphasis placed on

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13 Durant gives the dates of Northern European and Icelandic conversion ca. 1000 (4.502-4).

14 Branston, The Lost Gods of England 189-91. Branston, in the chapter entitled "Balder into Christ" discusses the adoption of Christianity by the Anglo-Saxons as a replacement of the old myth with the new -- and the new myth as a modification of the old.

the bondage of the Devil in the Old English and Old Saxon[15] accounts of the Genesis story.

The binding of Satan is also seen as a common illustration in late Anglo-Saxon manuscripts (Ellis Davidson 178-80), and appears in the Junius Manuscript at least twice in near proximity to the "Genesis B" text's account of the binding of Satan.[16] Banished to hell, Satan grieves over his position:

> ac licgaþ mē ymbe īrenbenda,
> rīdeþ racentan sāl-- ic eom rīces lēas--,
> hæbbaþ mē swā hearde helle clommas
> fæste befangen. Hēr is fyr micel
> ufan and neoþone: ic ā ne geseah
> lāðran landscipe; līg ne āswāmaþ
> hāt ofer helle. Mē habbaþ hringa gespong,
> slīðhearda sāl sīðes āmyrred,
> āfyrred mē mīn fēðe, fēt sint gebundene,
> handa gehæfte; synt þissa heldora
> wegas forworhte; swā ic mid wihte ne mæg
> of þissum liðobendum. (Klaeber 7; ll. 371-382)

> Sorely the rings of my bondage ride me!
> I am stripped of my kingdom. Firmly hell's fetters
> Are fastened upon me; the fires burn
> Above and below. A loathlier landscape
> I have never seen, flame unassuaged
> Surging through hell. These clasping shackles,
> These cruel-hard chains, hinder my going.

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15 George Krapp notes the similarity between the Anglo-Saxon "Genesis B" and an Old Saxon poem of near identical content; he attributes the similarity to the fact that the "Genesis B" text is a translation of the earlier Old Saxon poem (xxv). Dorothy Whitelock comments further that, based on the Old Saxon text, "Genesis B" is "a very free treatment of the legend of the Fall of Angels and of Man, with a dramatic handling of the characters" (127).

16 Gollancz states of the picture shown on the third page of the manuscript that Satan "is further shown lying fettered hand, foot, and neck" (xil). A later illustration on the seventeenth page shows images of bondage in hell.

> Hell's doors are bolted, the ways are barred,
> My hands are fastened, my feet are bound,
> I can no way get free of these fettering chains.
> (Kennedy 121-2)

Charles Kennedy notes with regard to the above passage that "both source material and its poetic shaping go far beyond Biblical paraphrase" (115); that is, the story of the Anglo-Saxon "Genesis B" offers enhancements to the Latin Vulgate, perhaps aimed at the new conversions of northern Europe.

Furthermore, as is mentioned by Ellis Davidson:

> In northern England there are carved stones from the Viking age showing monstrous bound figures, which could be identified with either Satan or Loki. (179)

One panel of the Gosforth Cross of Cumberland, while providing a link between the northern gods and those of the Anglo-Saxons, also links Loki and Satan by their bondage, in that it could be either figure being depicted. In this vein, Ellis Davidson continues:

> heathen motifs concerned with the end of the world . . . have been deliberately chosen because they can be presented in accordance with Christian teaching also. . . . The fact that the bound figure is found among these suggests that Loki here is equated with the bound Devil of apocalyptic tradition, and that he was therefore a familiar figure to the early converts. (179)

This identification of pagan and Christian figures can also be seen in a folk saying of Lincolnshire, recorded at the turn of the twentieth century:

> Thrice I smites with Holy Crock,
> With this mell I thrice do knock,
> One for God, and one for Wod,
> And one for Lok. (Ellis Davidson 180)

The attempt to incorporate aspects of the newer Christian figures with the older pagan characters, as seen above, also helps to prove, as Ellis Davidson comments, the existence of or at least awareness of pagan elements in the lives of the Anglo-Saxon people. Yet there are aspects of Anglo-Saxon heathenism which remain to this day, reinforcing the importance of the pagan gods to the early Germanic settlers of England. Sayings like the one from Lincolnshire above are further reflected in the traditional charms of England, which again show the prominence of pagan influence in light of Christian conversion efforts. A later Christianized story of a charm for a sprain includes reference to Balder and Woden:

> Phol [Balder] and Woden
> rode to the wood
> where Balder's foal
> wrenched its foot . . .
> then Woden charmed
> as he well knew how:
> as for bone-wrench
> so for blood-wrench
> so for limb-wrench;
> 'Bone to bone,
> blood to blood,
> limb to limbs,
> as if they were glued.'[17]
>
> (Branston, Lost Gods of England 49-50)

A similar employment of Nordic pagan beliefs is seen with the Old Norse "valkyrja" (valkyrie), who appear both in the charm against rheumatism, and also

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[17] Branston links this ninth-century Old High German charm with one common throughout all North-Western Europe which substitutes "Our Lord" for the pagan deities. Refer to J. Bostock A Handbook on Old High German Literature (Oxford:Clarendon Press, 1976) for the original (29).

in a later English poem, "Cleanness" as dark forces opposing God (Branston, Lost Gods of England 106-7).

Furthermore, some of the place names in England, as recorded by Brian Branston,[18] show the once-strong pagan orientation of the settlers of Anglo-Saxon England. Places located in a number of regions of Britain bear the name of Woden (Oðin), Thunor (Thor), and Frig. Branston lists several: Wodnes beorh (Woden's barrow), Wodnes denu (Woden's valley), Wednesbury (Woden's fortress), Wednesfield (Woden's plain), Thunor's hlæw (Thunor's mound), Thunores lea (Thunor's clearing), Thunderfield (in Surrey), Frydaythorpe, and Frobury and Froyle (The Lost Gods of England 41-2). The last of these, Branston claims, is akin to the popular Old English "Freohyll," meaning "the hills of the goddess Frig" (42). Consider also the days of the week as named in English; Wednesday is "Woden's day," Thursday is "Thunor's day," and Friday is "Frig's day." By the association of the names of the Nordic gods with English places and days of the week, one can further see to some extent the impact those gods must have had in the day to day life of the Anglo-Saxon people.

Though both the Anglo-Saxons and the Scandinavians share pagan traditions of similar origins,[19] there remains in Anglo-Saxon literature, however, very little evidence of pagan mythology. It is known, however, that the

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[18] Branston discusses this in his chapter entitled "Old English Heathenism" (Branston, Lost Gods of England 35-56).

[19] Branston (The Lost Gods of England 35-57, 171-89) further discusses the similarities between Old Norse and Old English mythology.

mythologies of the two related peoples are similar, as can be seen superficially in the relation of the names Oðin/Woden, Thor/Thunor, Frejya/Frig, and Volund/Wayland, and more deeply, as Branston notes:

> Where both Old English and Old Norse parallel sources remain there is . . . a large measure of agreement . . . [and] English sources show convincingly the complete correspondence of the Old English and Old Norse tales. (Branston, Lost Gods of England 46)

Consider, further, the Anglo-Saxon poem the "Dream of the Rood," which asks that the audience be familiar with the stories of the pagan Baldr/Balder. The poem draws parallels between Christ and Balder; most notable in this comparison is the fact that, just as all creation must weep for Balder's return from the underworld (but Loki does not), all creation without exception, including the crosses (Whitelock 156; l. 70), weeps for Christ:

> Wēop eal gesceaft,
> cwīðdon cyniges fyll; Crīst wæs on rōde.
> (Whitelock 156; ll. 55-6)

> all creation wept
> bewailing the King's death. Christ was on the cross. (Kennedy 145)

Pagan elements can also be seen in the poem's early vague references to the Rood, which could be remembrances of Yggdrasill as they refer to a wondrous tree:

> Þūhte mē Þæt ic gesāwe syllicre trēow
> on lyft læden lēohte bewunden
> bēama beorhtost. (Whitelock 153; ll. 4-6)

> Me-seemed I saw
> a wondrous Tree towering in air,
> Most shining of crosses compassed with light. (Kennedy 144)

Furthermore, there are references to the pagan and non-Christian idea of "wyrd."[20] For the writer of the poem to have drawn upon these parallels, as Branston notes, the memory of Balder and other pagan ideas must still have been quite strong in the minds of the newly converted Anglo-Saxons (Lost Gods of England, 200). Considering this level of familiarity which the "Dream of the Rood" poet could demand from his audience, the apparent abundance of geographic and charm references to the pagan gods, and the similarity of images of bondage in the tales and illustrations of Loki and Satan, one can presume, as Ellis Davidson asserts, that the Germanic pagan gods and the trickster figure of Loki were characters which were quite familiar to the Anglo-Saxons.

Since some secular and non-religious writings do exist in Old English, there very likely was at least some writing in Anglo-Saxon along the lines of the Old Norse Eddas, but none remains today. In the remaining Anglo-Saxon writing to which contemporary scholars have access, there emerges no trickster figure like the mythological Loki, even though he was a known element of Anglo-Saxon pagan life and also lived on briefly in the few attributes he later shared with the Christian Devil; interestingly, however, it is the opposing forces of Christ and Satan which each take on opposite aspects of Loki's dual nature in the predominantly Christian influenced Anglo-Saxon literature. However, at the level of the orally transmitted folk tradition in which the Norse tales originated and

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[20] Refer to Branston (Lost Gods of England 64-6, 164-9) for further discussion of the pagan elements of the "Dream of the Rood."

were initially passed from generation to generation it is not impossible to hypothesize that the tales of the pagan gods and Loki were still told. This hypothesis is quite likely true, considering trickster characters possessing characteristics like Loki's surface in the folk tales of Middle English times and in some folk-influenced trickster figures which appear in more specifically Christian contexts.

2. Christ, Satan, the Wise Man, and the Fool: Figures of Folly and Trickery in Anglo-Saxon Literature

While one can be fairly sure that the Anglo-Saxon people were aware of Loki and the pagan gods, literary fools and tricksters as represented in the remaining Anglo-Saxon writings are seen primarily among the religious figures of Christianity in Old English translations of the Bible. The Biblical Anglo-Saxon fool and trickster characters are in many ways dissimilar, however, to Loki of the Germanic mythical tradition mainly because they are based upon very different, Christian models.

Noticeably absent is the involvement of laughter in the acts of the trickster against those in positions of power, as is the element of duality which the trickster Loki incorporates in his own character. Furthermore, the Anglo-Saxon and Medieval religious figures do not point out paradoxes within themselves, but through their opposition to other figures show the duality of life. The fool of the Bible is not one who inspires laughter but who inspires pity instead; he is a person without enough wisdom to seek God, and is often opposed to the man who is in possession of his wits and has the wisdom to seek and worship God. Anglo-Saxon figures of trickery, like those of folly, appear to be unlike those of the pagan tradition. Figures of Christianity which have elements of the trickster in their personalities, including the Devil, God, Christ, and several of their agents, do not embody the same duality which is represented in the figure of Loki. The

paradoxical attributes of the pagan trickster are dichotomized in Christian literature; evil and virtuous trickery are separated by the nature of their purpose and the inspiration for their initiation. Furthermore, the objects of the tricks and folly in Christian literature are unlike those of the pagan tales. Articles like Draupnir, the ring, and Thor's hammer Mjöllnir are replaced by gains which generally are not tangible things but, rather, involve the spiritual life of man and often the right of his soul's passage to heaven. The defiant laughter inspired by Loki's successful exploits is also missing from the tales of the Christian tricksters and fools; there is nothing comic about the fool who lacks sense and cannot find God, nor is there any humour in a tale of the person who is deceived by the Devil to act against God, for the fates of both their souls are in peril, and possibly damned eternally. It is these attributes of the fool and trickster which are prevalent in Anglo-Saxon literature and are also present in the same figures as seen in later Medieval religious writing.

In Old English writing, the closest figure to one of folly is that of the "Dol," the fool, who is seen not as a comic figure who inspires laughter but more as the opposite of the wise man. The folly found in Anglo-Saxon writing thus is not one which is humorous and care-free; it opposes wisdom, and is quite serious. In this vein, Sandra Billington comments that this view of folly as being opposite to wisdom is wholly one influenced by Christianity, and specifically by the apostle Paul:

> As western Europe became Christianized "fool" initially retained St Paul's meaning and meant the witless man. (17)

In what are collectively known as the Old English wisdom poems, the type of dichotomy which existed for the Christian Anglo-Saxons between wisdom and folly is well exemplified. Possibly having descended from an early Greek poetic form, wisdom poetry was used by the Anglo-Saxons and other Germanic peoples to express aspects of their understanding of the world around them (Jackson 132). In wisdom poetry, also often referred to as gnomic verse, one finds concise aphorisms, expressed as proverbial insight, on subjects as diverse as natural phenomena, the duties of various positions within society, and ethical ideals. Thus, Old English wisdom poetry acts as a type of catalogue of knowledge for the Anglo-Saxons. This type of poetry serves the same purpose for other peoples of Germanic descent. In what is generally considered to be a wisdom poem, the Old Norse "Hávamál" ("the Words of the High One [Oðin]"), the reader learns of how Oðin hangs himself on Yggdrasill to obtain wisdom; the results of his experiences are found in his exposition, which is "a conglomeration of proverbs [and] charms" in which Oðin relays his knowledge to others (Branston, Gods of the North 115). The wisdom poem in its Anglo-Saxon form is quite linked to that seen in Old Norse, just as the pagan heritages of the two peoples are inextricably connected.

In the Old Norse "Hávamál," one finds the dichotomy of wisdom and folly not tied with the knowledge of God but, rather, with the experience of the world. Oðin, the wanderer in search of wisdom, states this in an aphorism:

> Kópir afglapi,
> er til kynnis kemr,
> þylsk hann um eða þrumir;
> allt er senn,
> ef hann sylg of getr,
> uppi er þá geð guma.
>
> Sá einn veit,
> er víða ratar
> ok hefr fjölð of farit,
> hverju geði
> styrir gumna hverr,
> sá er vitandi er vits.
> (Jónsson, Sæmundar-Edda 27; sts. 17-8)
>
> When he meets friends, the fool gapes,
> Is shy and sheepish at first,
> Then he sips his mead and immediately
> All know what an oaf he is.
>
> He who has seen and suffered much,
> And knows they ways of the world,
> He who has travelled, can tell what spirit
> Governs the men he meets. (Taylor 40)

The fool, or un-wise man, of "Hávamál" is one who lacks experience of the world around him;[21] the knowledge of God here is not part of the wisdom/folly dichotomy. In another tale of a man in search of wisdom, the Anglo-Saxon poem called the "Wanderer," one sees a similar sentiment expressed about the nature of wisdom:

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21 Emphasis on the unwise actions of the fool are further shown in stanzas 22-7.

For þon ne mæg weorþan wis wer, ær hē āge
wintra dæl in woruldrīce.
(Whitelock 162; ll. 64-5)

No man may know wisdom till many a winter
Has been his portion. (Kennedy 6)

Ultimately, the wanderer of this Anglo-Saxon poem does not himself find the wisdom he seeks, perhaps intending to show the Anglo-Saxon audience the limitations of pagan wisdom in comparison to Christian wisdom.[22] Regardless of the intentions of the poet, however, the "Wanderer" does show the figure of the wanderer in search of knowledge as is previously seen in the character of Oðin in "Hávamál"; this figure is one which is present throughout Germanic and other literatures, and the attributes of the wanderer appear in later figures of folly and trickery, Parzival and Tyl Eulenspiegel.

Because of the prominence of wisdom poems such as the "Wanderer" and "Hávamál" as vessels of knowledge, it is important to note the type of reference these make to the figure of the fool. In one instance, the author of "Maxims I" states that only the fool does not know his Lord, while the wise man is fully aware of Him and holds his soul properly:

Dol biþ se þe his dryhten nat, to þæs oft cymeð deað
unþinged;
snotre men sawlum beorgað, healdað hyra soð mid
ryhte. (Shippey 64)

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22 This is further supported by the ending of the poem, where the writer adds comments with quite Christian overtones.

> A man who does not know his Lord is a fool; death often comes unexpectedly to him. Wise men look after their souls, they uphold their integrity with justice.
> (Shippey 65)

Similarly, in "The Second Dialogue of Solomon and Saturn," which is a dialogue "between Solomon, representing [knowledge of] the Judeo-Christian tradition, and Saturn, representing pagan wisdom" (Menner 5), the fool is given the attributes opposing those of a man of wisdom, as told by Solomon:

> Dol bið se ðe gæð on deop wæter,
> se ðe sund nafað ne gesegled scip,
> ne fugles flyht, ne he mid fotum ne mæg
> grund geræcan. Huru se godes cunnaþ
> full dyslice, dryhtnes meahta. (Shippey 88)

> He is a fool who embarks on deep water if he cannot swim, has no ship with sails, cannot fly like a bird, nor reach the bottom with his feet. Such a man is certainly tempting God very foolishly, and the powers of the Lord. (Shippey 89)

The two dialogues of Solomon and Saturn, which present the fool as one who does not possess wisdom, also show the triumph of Christian thought over pagan thought (Menner 6); thus, Solomon shows Christianity to be the true wisdom and proves the pagan knowledge to be akin to folly.

In the Christian dichotomy of the fool and the wise man the fool is always wrong, with his actions leading to hell and damnation, and the wise man always right, with his actions leading to a closeness with God and an assured spot in heaven. Perhaps the best example of the evil side of this duality is seen in the character of Satan; as told in "Genesis B," Satan, once a wise angel in heaven, becomes foolish, "dole," and is sentenced to hell:

. . . þe ær wæs engla scynost,
hwītost on heofne and his Hearran lēof,
Drihtne dyre, oð hīe tō dole wurdon,
þæt him for gālscipe God sylfa wearð
mihtig on mōde yrre, wearp hine on þæt morðer innan,
niðer on þæt nīobedd, and sceōp him naman siððan,
cwæð se hēhsta hātan sceolde
Sātan siððan, hēt hine þære sweartan helle
grundes gyman, nalles wið God winnan.
(Klaeber 6; ll. 338-46)

. . . [he] formerly was the most beautiful angel,
the whitest in heaven, and loved by his Master,
dear to his Lord, until [he] became foolish
in his pride so that mighty God himself became
very angry, [and] cast him into that torment,
down to that bed of death, and afterwards gave him a
name,
[God] said the highest one must be called
Satan henceforth, ordered him to take charge of
the bottom depths of dark hell, never again with God to fight.[23]

This system of dichotomized thinking appears consistent with the ideas of Turkish or Manichean Dualism, a philosophy which views the world as a combination of the diametrically opposed forces of God/Satan, Good/Evil, Light/Darkness, and so forth (Durant 4.47). This dichotomized view of the world was moving westward and northward with the spread of Christian ideas (Durant 4.528), and the diametric oppositions of the fool and the wise man and also, as will soon be discussed, between the Christian tricksters, seem to reflect closely this philosophy of contrasting entities.

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[23] The translation in the text is my own with reference to Gordon (120) for the main matter and to Bosworth for an interpretation of the line reading "oð hīe tō dole wurdon," which he translates as "until they became foolish" (s. v. Dol, 206)

It is this type of thinking, an ideology where opposites are seen in total separation and never in union, which perhaps leads to the later representation of Loki as a diabolical figure. Some early Old English representations of Satan, as discussed previously, reflect a close association with the later Loki. Parallels can be seen further in the fall from grace each figure experiences; Satan, who started out an archangel and fell vowing vengeance, parallels Loki, who started as a companion to his fellow gods but, fallen from their favour, led to their destruction. Parallels between the two end here, however, because Satan's character does not unify the opposite forces of good and evil. Thus, a trickster figure like Loki cannot and does not exist in Anglo-Saxon Christian writings.

The figure of the literary trickster, though, is one which is not unknown to the Anglo-Saxons, for they have the figures of opposition in the Christian Bible. Though the characters of the fool and the wise man are not at the same cosmic level as the metaphysical characters of Christian literature, the same diametrically opposed arrangement which exists between the fool and wise man is present in the intense contrast found between figures of good trickery, God and Christ, and evil trickery, the Devil. About the opposition found between the Christian tricksters, Kathleen Ashley comments, with reference to earlier pagan tricksters such as Loki:

> What we have in Christ and Satan . . . is a pair of tricksters who have evolved from one idea of the sacred, a god who paradoxically encompasses both good and evil. (127)

Loki, a trickster of the Germanic tradition, is a figure who does paradoxically encompass both good and evil; even Oðin occasionally supports Loki's tricks, and participates in trickery himself on occasion. In nearly all situations, their tales are accompanied by the laughter of defiance, justice, and awkward situation.

In the trickery involving God and Satan, however, one cannot say that this type of paradoxical situation exists. Neither one supports the other, neither incorporates attributes of both good and evil, nor can one say that there is much humour involved in contests between the forces of good and evil. While there may be laughter for God's victory, since it offers a reaffirmation of social and spiritual values, there is no comic folly in this. In the Christian Anglo-Saxon world, God is all that is good and the Devil all that is evil,[24] just as the fool is one with wholly defective logic and the wise man possesses no attributes of the fool. Though trickery is committed for both good and evil purposes, no character employs deception for both sides. Lastly, the trickery that does occur is devoid of folly and, hence, lacks the humour of the pagan tales.

Consider the very serious role of the serpent in Genesis. As is told in the Old English and Old Saxon "Genesis B" texts, the Devil uses the shape-shifting abilities which most trickster figures possess to take on the form of the serpent to tempt Adam:

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[24] Ashley states that "Satan's guile is pure malice; Christ's guile is grace, which recapitulates the elements of the fall and undoes the evil brought by it" (134).

Wearp hine þā on wyrmes lī e and wand him þā ymbūtan
þone dēaðes bēam þurh dēofles cræft,
genam þær þæs ofætes and wende hine eft þanon
þær hē wiste handgeweorc Heofoncyninges.
Ongan hine þā frī nan forman worde
se lāða mid ligenum. (Klaeber 12; ll. 491-6)

Then the fiend put on the form of the serpent
In twining coils round the tree of death;
Took of the fruit and turned him thence
To where he saw Adam, God's handiwork.
With wily falsehood from the first word
The Devil began to ask of Adam. (Kennedy 124)

Though the Devil claims to be in God's service,[25] Adam is a wise man, and heeds the words of his Lord. Thus, he is not led astray by Satan's deception. He responds to the serpent, revealing the Devil for who he is, a character of deceitful purpose, "dyrne geþanc," falsehood, "ligen," and deceptive seduction, "bedreōsan":

þonne ic Sigedrihten,
mihtigne God mædlan gehyrde
strangre stemme, and mē hēr stondan hēt,
his bebodu healdan, and mē þās bryd forgeaf
wlitesci ene wī f, and mē warnian hēt
þæt ic on þone dēaðes bēam bedroren ne wurde,
beswicen tō swī ðe: hē cwæð þæt þā sweartan helle
healdan sceolde sē ðe bī his heortan wuht
lāðes gelæde. Nāt þēah þū mid ligenum fare
þurh dyrne geþanc þe þū Drihtnes eart
boda of heofnum. (Klaeber 13-4; ll. 523-33)

When I heard the Almighty,
The Victor Lord speaking with solemn voice,
And he bade me dwell here and do His will,

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[25] Of God, the serpent speaks these words: "Ic eom on his ærende hider / feorran gefēred" (Klaeber 12; ll. 496-7: "I come in His service, faring from afar" [Kennedy 124]).

Gave me the woman, this glowing bride,
And bade me guard that I be not beguiled
Or ever tempted to the tree of death,
He said that blackest hell shall hold him fast
Who harbours in his heart one whit of evil.
Though you come with lies and with cunning guile
I do not know that you come from God,
An angel from Heaven. (Kennedy 125)

Turning his evil attentions to Eve, the Devil has more success than with Adam, partially because "God had fashioned for [Eve] a feebler mind." She is more fool than Adam, and is more easily deceived by the tempter:

Lædde hīe swā mid ligenum and mid listum spēon
idese on þæt unriht, oð þæt hire on innan ongan
weallan wyrmes geþeaht-- hæfde hire wācran hige
Metod gemearcod. (Klaeber 16; ll. 589-91)

And so with lies and with luring wiles
He urged the woman to that deed of evil,
Till the serpent's words began to work within her
(For God had fashioned for her a feebler mind).
(Kennedy 126)

Likewise, Eve, acting in accordance with the Devil's intentions, tricks Adam into eating of the apple and, consequently, man falls from grace. The Devil's actions in this text can be seen as perhaps being mischievous, but given that his action leads to the fall of man, the deception of Eve hardly seems related to the folly seen in many of Loki's deceptions. The Devil's actions are akin to those of the later Loki; they are too serious and dangerous in consequence to be taken as humorous. There is no joy or laughter found in the tale of a character who brings hardship upon all mankind by his deceit. Furthermore, part of the humour of Loki's exploits is that he can outwit powerful gods; in the tale of the fall of man,

Satan outwits one of a feebler mind than the wise Adam, and few find pleasure in seeing a fool outwitted.

There is a type of joy, however, that is felt when the powerful are deceived, especially when the powerful are evil forces. Such a Biblical tale which inspires joy in the triumph of good over evil is found in the apocryphal book of "Judith." The story of Judith, from the "Beowulf Codex," presents a trickster who acts on behalf of the Lord. Though based on the Vulgate version of the book of Judith, the Anglo-Saxon translation of the book is developed more "for dramatic effect" than as a paraphrase of the Vulgate (Morrell 32-3). Regardless, the story of Judith is one which involves deception, but the outcome of the trick is positive. Judith is wise in thought, "gleaw on geðonce" (Dobbie 99; l. 14), and is thought by Holofernes' men to resemble the Holy Virgin, "halige meowle" (Dobbie 100; l. 56). Offered strength and protection by God, she goes to Holofernes' dining quarters, where he and his men are drinking excessively, and is bidden to be brought to his bed-chamber because Holofernes has designs upon her:

> Þa wearð se brema on mode
> bliðe, burga ealdor, þohte ða beorhtan idese
> mid wilde ond mid womme besmitan.
> (Dobbie 100; ll. 57-9)

> The famous prince
> of cities then exalted in his heart,
> planned to pollute that fair lady with sin and foulness. (Hamer 139)

On her first night in Holofernes' tent, Judith is protected by the Host from Holofernes' passions, and his wine tires him. On the second night, Judith calls

for the Lord's strength, receives it, and with a heart of renewed hope cunningly "[lays] the malicious one down" (Gordon 322):

> Þa wearð hyre rume on mode,
> haligre hyht geniwod; genam ða ðone hæðenan mannan
> fæste be feaxe sinum, teah hyne folmum wið hyre weard
> bysmerlice, ond þone bealofullan
> listum alede, laðne mannan,
> swa heo ðæs unlædan eaðost mihte
> wel gewealdan. (Dobbie 102; ll. 97-103)

> Then was her heart
> relieved, hope in the Holy One renewed.
> She took the heathen man fast by his hair,
> pulled him towards her shamefully by hand,
> skilfully placed the evil, hated wretch
> as she might best have power over him. (Hamer 143)

In this way, Judith saves her city by deceiving Holofernes. She is a good trickster, acting on behalf of the Lord, while her victim is an evil figure who is doomed forever to hell. In this, perhaps, there is some joy because the forces of good triumph over evil, but, again, the comedy is not similar to the laughter of the pagan tales, which presents the gods and the trickster in humorous and sometimes degrading situations. Though Judith has murdered a man, the action is quite proper; the difference between the good and evil character is made quite blatant, and it is obvious that a wise woman with God on her side will triumph over a man of evil and still retain her virtue.

These two texts, relating the fall of man and the story of Judith, serve to exemplify the opposition between the fool and the wise man and the two types of trickster figure found in surviving Anglo-Saxon literature. In these and other

stories, Satan's actions are all evil and possess no saving grace, while the actions on behalf of the Lord are all virtuous. In this way, the union of opposites which can occur in the pagan or tribal trickster character of Loki is rejected in the cosmic tricksters God, Satan, and those acting under their influence. Though parallels between Loki and Satan were likely used by missionaries converting the Anglo-Saxons, ultimately total comparison between the two cannot exist, for the influence of dichotomized thought upon Christianity does not allow for a single figure to encompass the opposite extremes of good and evil.

3. Cosmic Tricksters and the Irony of the Wisdom/Folly Dichotomy in Middle English Religious Literature

The dichotomy which is present in Anglo-Saxon Christian thinking is further reflected in the Middle English period, and is further supported by St. Augustine, one of the Fathers of the Latin Church. Similarly, the characters of the fool and trickster in Anglo-Saxon literature are also reflected in the same figures found in Middle English religious literature; as would be expected, the story of the serpent's deception and the tale of Judith are as large a part of Middle English life as they are of that of the Anglo-Saxons. Other like aspects of the figures of the trickster and the fool are found in some influential works of Middle English religious literature, such as the Gospel of Nicodemus, and plays based on Biblical incidents which appear in the dramatic cycles; two dramas which have received critical attention in this regard are the Second Shepherds' Play, which introduces the arch-trickster Christ to three shepherds after they are nearly tricked out of a lamb from their flock, and the "Harrowing of Hell," where Christ beguiles the guiler Satan.

The Eastern dichotomized thought which was of great influence in Anglo-Saxon religious literature sees a reinforcement in the later Middle Ages as well, which were strongly influenced by Augustinian thought (Robertson xii), in itself strongly dichotomous. In On Christian Doctrine, Augustine reinforces the view of folly as being opposed to wisdom in his discussion of life:

> . . . when [men] find this [intelligent life of men] to be mutable, they are forced to value still more highly an immutable life, a life which is not sometimes foolish and sometimes wise but is rather Wisdom itself. For a wise mind which has learned wisdom was not wise before it had learned it, but Wisdom itself was never foolish and never can be. (Augustine 12)

Similar to the authors of Anglo-Saxon wisdom poetry, Augustine holds that the man who is not a fool, who is cleansed of sin, dedicated to truth, and afraid of God enjoys the comforts of the Lord and the way to wisdom:

> . . . [the] holy one will be of such simple and clean heart that he will not turn away from the Truth either in a desire to please men or for the sake of avoiding any kind of adversities to himself which arise in this life. Such a son ascends to wisdom . . . where he enjoys peace and tranquillity. "For the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."[26] (Augustine 40)

Augustine also elaborates on the fate of the unholy, and offers a warning. The fools, those who are dedicated to that which opposes the truth and wisdom which can be found only in God, are subject to deception by other men and, ultimately, by Satan himself:

> . . . men who desire evil things are subjected to illusion and deception as a reward for their desires, being mocked and deceived by those lying angels to whom, according to the most beautiful ordering of things, the lowest part of this world is subject by the law of Divine Providence.
>
> . . . therefore, the society of demons is to be feared and avoided, since they seek to do nothing under their leader the Devil but to block and cut off our return homeward. (Augustine 58-60)

This idea of evil ends coming to evil men can be seen in the figure of Holofernes, war maker and desirer of lusty and, therefore, evil activities with Judith; he is

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[26] Augustine quotes Psalms 111, v.10.

easily deceived by her and killed.[27] Continuing in this vein, Eve, who desires the knowledge of God but is not wise enough to follow His word and is thus a fool, is easily tricked by Satan.

In this way, the Augustinian ideas which had such influence in the Middle Ages are reflected in the dual nature of the Anglo-Saxon fool and tricksters. However, Augustine also offers a slightly modified view of the dual nature of the universe. He states:

> Because He is good, we are; and in so far as we are, we are good . . . and in so far as we are evil, to that extent our being is lessened.
>
> . . . things which are cannot be unless they take their existence from Him, and they are good only so far as He grants them existence.
> (Augustine 27)

In this passage, Augustine treats good and evil much as the dichotomized thinking seen before treats wisdom and folly. Assuming, then, that one aspires to be good, and that in goodness is found the wisdom of that ultimate state of being, Augustine's thinking would also assert that the extent to which one aspires to wisdom equals the extent to which one exists; and the extent to which one deviates from wisdom--that is, the extent to which one participates in folly--equals the extent to which one is deprived of existence.

Within this hypothesis, oppositions still exist between good/evil and wisdom/folly, but evil and folly are not actual qualities; rather, evil is simply the

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[27] It is interesting to note that while the Anglo-Saxon version of the text makes it very clear that Holofernes joins the demons in hell, the Vulgate text does not specify.

absence of good, and folly the absence of wisdom. While characters of evil do still exist, they exist firstly by the grace of God, their creator, and because they do possess some qualities of good, however slight. Thus, while the oppositions of these qualities do exist, their interrelation is slightly altered, with the existence of both being firmly rooted in the powers of the Almighty. By removing the entities of evil and folly, Augustine's ideas also further remove the ability of a figure to encompass both ends of the spectrum. The aforementioned pagan figure of Loki combines both good and evil in his character, but cannot do so under this hypothesis. Satan, according to the Augustinian view, rather than being all-evil is merely lacking in goodness; under a strictly dichotomous philosophy, to possess the least part of goodness would alter his character, although to exist at all in Augustine's methodology he must possess some goodness, however small.

Though figures of evil trickery, as seen in the above character of Satan, are difficult to reconcile in Augustine's thought, his hypothesis is consistent with the view of God and Christ as tricksters; they are all-good and all-wise, and to house characteristics which would detract from their goodness or wisdom would make them something less than holy. It appears, thus, that because of the inability of Augustine's hypothesis to incorporate accurately the evil trickster, a straight, simplistic dichotomous philosophy is more applicable to the cosmic tricksters and also to most aspects of Middle English life involving folly and deception.

Truly, the extent to which this Augustinian view is represented in aspects of Middle English religious life which have to do with trickery and folly seems

questionable. Though surely the ideas of Augustine and other Fathers of the Church were treated seriously by the Church in later Medieval England (Robertson xii), it is ironic that ceremonies which incorporate the absence of good and, especially, wisdom were a part of Church life. This aspect of Middle English life is found in ceremonies involving and encouraging folly, such as the Deposuit, a liturgical farce practised throughout Europe until approximately the fifteenth century. It is notable for its inversion of the Church's order; because the lower clergy assumed the power of the upper clergy, it was more appropriately referred to as the "Feast of Fools." Thought to have its roots in heathen custom (Coulton 606), it was incorporated by the Church throughout Europe, and is perhaps described best in a letter written by an observer from the University of Paris to the King of France:

> Priests and clerks may be seen wearing masks and monstrous visages at the hours of office. They dance in the choir dressed as women, or disreputable men, or minstrels. They sing wanton songs. . . . They play dice at the altar. . . . They run and leap through the church, without a blush at their own shame. Finally, they drive about town and its theatres in shabby carriages and carts; and rouse the laughter of their fellows and the bystanders in infamous performances, with indecent gestures and with scurrilous and unchaste words. (Coulton 606-7)

All reports of this ceremony indicate that it spawned mass pandemonium, yet this inversion of the usual role of Priest and Clerk was not considered by its Middle English participants to be mad. Aside from the sensed impropriety of the celebration which is indicated in the above description,[28] the Feast of Fools

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[28] Coulton (606) comments that its impropriety led to its abolition in 1445.

contained a type of pagan comic sensibility which inspired laughter and celebration.

While with regard to the Feast of Fools it is interesting to note the extent of the Church's incorporation of pagan customs to weave itself further into the texture of its people's day to day life, it is also interesting to note the role of the Church in this celebration. The group of "Fools" in the Feast of Fools included men of the Church, celebrating a lack of adherence to their normal roles in society by behaving in an opposite manner. The "Fools," though, however distasteful their actions, were not considered truly mad, for their inverted roles were supported for the most part by the organizing body of Middle English society: the Church. Furthermore, the Feast of Fools is not the sole example of this type of activity; this same type of celebration of folly is found in the eastern European tradition of "Fools for Christ's Sake" (Koepping 202) and, secularly, in the pagan-inspired verse of the "scholares vagantes," the Goliard Poets of Europe (Waddell xvi):

> . . . [it is] the poetry of the Bohemian life and the tavern. It shows no respect for rank or authority, makes light of death, has no concern for the future either in this world or the next.
> (Baugh 1.149)

The celebration of the absence of godly wisdom, folly, is obviously not an isolated thing in Middle English life.

It is, however, rather ironic for a Church that despised and worked against folly to promote it in ceremonies integrated so thoroughly into the religious fabric

of its followers. This is especially paradoxical since, as stated by Augustine, folly is simply an absence of wisdom and is not to be associated with the Christian man, who values "a life which is not sometimes foolish and sometimes wise but is rather Wisdom itself" (Augustine 12). The reckless abandonment of Church members to folly, then, would certainly be seen as an abandonment of their Christian nature and, thus, as an action against God. In reality, too, excerpts from Barclay's Ship of Fools indicate that during festival season the people's actions did deviate greatly from God's law:

> They wander ragynge more madly in theyr vyce
> Than doth suche people as forsake goddes lawe,
> Whan to theyr ydols they make theyr sacrifyce,
> Whose names to tell as for nowe I despyse! . . .
>
> And other some in straunge londes gyse
> Aray them selfe, eche after his delyte;
> And other some besyde theyr nayne habyte
> Defyle theyr faces, so that playne trouth to tell,
> They ar more fowle than the blacke devil of hell.
> (Pompen 256-7; sts. 1754, 1756)

Strangely, this abandonment of wisdom and goodness for activities of folly and vice concealed by painted faces and masks was tolerated as part of Church ritual almost until the early Renaissance; and after celebrations praising folly had been driven out of the Church, they continued to be carried out by more secular organizing bodies (Kaiser 516). It seems obvious that this type of celebration of folly went against the grain of religious life as outlined by St. Augustine, for why would one celebrate one's separation from God and wisdom? Possibly these

types of ceremony, rooted in heathen custom, were a celebration of a type of duality seen expressed in more pagan cultures.

Another aspect of this paradox is further explored by Penelope Doob in her book Nebuchadnezzar's Children. In her discussion of the themes associated with Herod as a mad sinner in Middle English drama, she comments also on the paradoxical nature of Christianity, especially in its treatment of the fool. While, as has been discussed, Christianity pities the fool who lacks the wit to follow God, it also praises the figure of Christ, who is referred to as the Holy Fool (110). Christ, one who by Augustine's thought possesses all wisdom is, thus, a fool when the spiritual sanity of the Holy Fool is opposed to the "madness of worldly wisdom" (Doob 115) of Herod. Doob continues, quoting the Bible:

> Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise.[29] (121)

As well, Kaiser comments on this idea in relation to the subject of the "wise fool," stating that this concept "is inherently reversible; for whenever it is acknowledged that the fool is wise, it is also suggested . . . that the wise are foolish" (517). This train of thought adds a strange twist to previously discussed dichotomies: can the wisdom of God truly be the folly of worldly wisdom? Certainly any activity, including folly, which leads to the knowledge of God must be wise and, according to the Augustinian hypothesis, if God created the foolish things in the world, they must possess characteristics of His wisdom.

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[29] Doob quotes 1 Corinthians 1:20, 27.

In this way, perhaps the celebration of folly in the Feast of Fools is tolerable. Firstly, it represents total abandonment to a religious ceremony, thus bringing one closer to God. Secondly, it is a celebration of one of God's creations. The foolish actions of the celebration, however, do seem incongruous to a system of beliefs that does not incorporate opposing characteristics in a single being. Perhaps in this case, the Feast of Fool's origins in western European pagan culture, which could synthesize apparently opposing characteristics in a single personality, is the key to understanding its ironic presence in Middle English religious life.

As with certain aspects of Middle English religious life, the extent to which areas of the Augustinian view of dualism is represented in the fool and trickster characters in the literature of the Middle Ages is also questionable, for the diametric opposition of wisdom and folly and of the good and evil tricksters seems quite prevalent in Middle English writing and drama.[30] One example used by Kathleen Ashley in her article, "The Guiler Beguiled: Christ and Satan as Theological Tricksters," is found in the Second Shepherds' Play of the Towneley cycle; in this play the reader finds the opposition between characters existing in accordance with this dualist philosophy. There is a distinct contrast established between the shepherds, who are good and aligned with the coming of Christ, and

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[30] Coulton also speaks of the link between ceremonies such as the Feast of Fools and the humour and sensibility of the Miracle Plays (607).

the trickster characters of Mak and his wife, whose defeat is paralleled to that of Satan.

The first and second shepherds are presumably good men, and though they worry that the third shepherd will trick them--"He wyll make vs both a ly / Bot if we be war" (Cawley 46; ll. 116-7)--he is harmless as a trickster. The third shepherd is aptly named Daw, a diminutive form of David but also related to the Anglo-Saxon "dol," and here likely possesses the connotation of fool (Rose 257). It is the foolish shepherd, however, who sees beneath the disguise of Mak, the main trickster in the play. Mak steals one of the flock as the shepherds sleep, and, later, his wife Gill hatches a plot to conceal the sheep from them:

> A good bowdre haue I spied, syn thou can none:
> Here shall we hym hyde, to thay be gone,
> In my credyll. Abyde! Lett me alone,
> And I shall lyg besyde in chyldbed, and grone.
> (Cawley 48; ll. 332-5)

Gill's reference to Mak as "Syr Gyle" (Cawley 54; l. 408) also reinforces his own role in the play.[31] Suspecting Mak, the shepherds inspect his cottage. After departing empty handed, however, the shepherds realize that they have not given the child an offering, and return to the cottage. In this way, the shepherds outsmart the evil Mak by acting in kindness, reveal the long-snouted child, and discover the fraud:

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[31] Though it is more likely that the sound of the "g" in "Gyle" would be soft, as the /d_3/ of "George," the pun on the name is quite evident in the written work; but, perhaps, it would be less evident to the Middle English audiences of the play.

This was a qwantt gawde and a far-cast:
It was a hee frawde. (Cawley 59; ll. 593-4)

Discovered in his crime, Mak puts himself at the mercy of the good shepherds, who "exorcise" him by tossing him in a canvas.

The theme of the trickster being tricked or the guiler being beguiled (Ashley 133), as seen in the Second Shepherds' Play, is a common one in Middle English trickster literature. In fact, the story of Mak and the shepherds is a common one in the folk literature of Europe itself; Stith Thompson, in his book The Types of the Folktale, connects the tale with Irish mythology, and Spanish and prominent Germanic folklore (434). Though based on or at least connected with folklore, the Second Shepherds' Play also employs religious aspects as part of its larger incorporation into Church ritual, which elevates it and separates it from folklore. On one level the play presents the story of the shepherds and Mak, but their actions are a comic version of the more important purpose of the play, which is to tell of the birth of Christ. In this vein, Ashley comments, "Just as Satan, the cosmic Beguiler, will be defeated by Christ through the Incarnation, so the shepherds exorcise the socially disruptive Mak" (Ashley 136). When the shepherds have dealt with Mak, the Angel addresses them, telling them of Christ's birth:

Ryse, hyrd-men heynd, for now he is borne
That shall take fro the feynd that Adam had lorne;
That warloo to sheynd, this nyght is he borne.
(Cawley 60; ll. 638-40)

The emphasis in the Angel's address is placed upon Satan's first deception, and, as Ashley comments, the first shepherd's words to Christ tell of Satan's already being defeated by His birth:

> Thou has waryd, I weyne, the warlo so wylde:
> The fals gyler of teyn, now goys he begylde.
> (Cawley 62; ll. 712-3)

Satan's character in Middle English religious drama is that of the evil trickster, largely because of his successful beguiling in the fall of man. The role of Satan as successful trickster, however, is reversed to that of one who is tricked. This is shown in the Second Shepherds' Play, for it is in the Incarnation that the powers of good play their greatest trick. Only in the form of man can Christ deceive the Devil into trying to win the soul of an immortal; this, according to Middle English thought, is a violation of the Devil's rightful power over man (Ashley 128). Timothy Fry summarizes as follows the Abuse-of-Power theory which Satan violates:

> . . . the theory supposes that when Adam and Eve fell into original sin, Satan was permitted to inflict death on them and all mankind and hold them captive in hell. Christ, born of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, was not subject to that law of death. Satan, however, was deceived by the human nature of Christ, and, bringing about His death, abused his power, and lost the souls in hell.[32] (529)

By His adoption of human form, then, Christ's character is that of the successful trickster. Ashley states,

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[32] Fry comments on several aspects of the Abuse of Power theory and how it is the unifying factor of the N-town Cycle.

> In order to redeem mankind, the deity disguised himself in human flesh, and the disguise tricked the Devil in attempting to kill one who was not mortal. (Ashley 128)

In this way, just as in the shepherds' triumph over Mak and Gill, the beguiler is beguiled in Christ's triumph over Satan; just as the exposure of the contents of Gill's cradle ends the good shepherds' beguiling, so too does the Christ of the manger end the beguiling of His followers. By beating Satan at his own game, Christ proves himself to be the ultimate trickster of Middle English religious literature.

It is these elements of trickery and guile in Christ's victory over Satan which is touched upon also in plays such as the York Cycle's "Harrowing of Hell." Loosely based upon the "Gospel of Nicodemus" (Hulme xix)--which traces events leading up to and including Christ's crucifixion, resurrection, and victory over Satan in hell--and other "Harrowing of Hell" stories, the play concentrates on the contest between Christ and Satan in hell itself. Though the Anglo-Saxons were familiar with the story of the "Harrowing of Hell," Christ's function in the Anglo-Saxon version of the tale is to descend to hell to conquer the Devil, as one would do in battle.[33] Contrarily, Middle English versions of the story place more emphasis on His victory over the Devil because of the superiority of His virtue and wisdom and, thus, His ability to deceive the Deceiver.

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[33] Gordon describes the Anglo-Saxon Harrowing of Hell, found in "Christ and Satan," as the "story of Christ's triumphant invasion of the underworld" (127).

Christ's initial address to the audience sets the mood for the play, and for a contest between the two over the souls of the sinners who are in Satan's domain:

> Þe feende þame wanne with trayne
> Thurgh frewte of erthely foode;
> I haue þame getyn agayne
> Thurgh bying with my bloode.
> (Beadle 333; ll. 9-12)

The element of "trayne," guile, is further emphasised by Christ's reference to issuing a sign tc begin the contest:

> . . . some signe schall I sende before
> Of grace, to garre þer gamys begynne.
> (Beadle 334; ll. 19-20)

The word "gamys," which can refer to "joy" the act of "rejoicing," also has connotations of "game" and "sport" (Beadle 496). While both sets of connotations work well within the word's context, the latter meaning is supported by the Digby version of the "Harrowing of Hell." In the Digby story, a threat from Satan to Christ comes as a challenge to enter hell and to operate, or play, under hell's rules, which are understood to be the rules of guile and deception:

> Ne red ich him speken na more,
> He may nou so muchel do,
> Þat he sal ous comen to
> To ben houre fere
> And witen hou we pleyeþ here.
> (Hulme 6; ll. 47-52)

Furthermore, when Christ demands the doors of hell be opened in the York play, Satan claims to his followers that he knows the "trantis," tricks, and deceptive actions of Christ, and does not appear threatened by them:

> I knowe his trantis fro toppe to taile,
> He leuys with gaudis and with guilery.
> (Beadle 337; ll. 159-60)

In the end, however, it is proven that Satan does not truly know the tricks of Christ and because of his lack of knowledge he is shown to be a fool; he proclaims "Now wex I woode oute of my witte" (Beadle 342; l. 344) before being condemned by Jesus into the pit of hell.

Continuing with the idea of the struggle between Jesus and Satan as a contest, after Jesus frees His people, Adam states,

> To þe, lorde, be louyng,
> Þat vs has wonne fro waa.
> (Beadle 343; ll. 405-6)

Though the word "wonne" has connotations of rescue and redemption, it also connotes its present meaning of the spoils of a conquest, the winnings. The spoils of this conquest, the souls of His followers, have gone to Christ.[34] The emphasis

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[34] As with the Anglo-Saxon "Harrowing of Hell" found in "Christ and Satan," the mention of the "Harrowing of Hell" in the Anglo-Saxon poem "The Dream of the Rood" places emphasis not on Christ's wisdom in returning the souls to heaven but, rather, on His power and strength:

> Se Sunu wæs sigorfæst on þām sīðfate,
> mihtig and spēdig . . . (Whitelock 159; ll. 150-1)
>
> In that great deed
> God's son was triumphant, possessing power
> and strength. (Kennedy 148)

of the victory over Satan by contest is further emphasized in the Galba manuscript of the "Gospel of Nicodemus," where the fiends scold Satan for his loss of the souls because of his lack of wit in comparison to that of Christ:

> . . . if þat he had done none ill,
> þou suld haue gert þam blin;
> whi suld þou bring a man vs till
> in wham was sene no syn?
> all has þou lost now by þis skill
> þe wightes þat war herein,
> and þou þaire paines sall ay fulfill
> with wo never out to wyn;
> þat we wan thurgh þe tre
> when eue þe fruit had etyn,
> ilk dele ogayn has he
> now with þe rode-tre getyn.
> (Hulme 114; st. 123, ll. 1465-1476)

The fiends also effectively contrast the original sin, Satan's first evil deception of man, with Christ's final victory over the forces of Satan's evil.[35] In the same way, "ilk dele," that those souls were won by Eve's partaking of the fruit, they are lost by Christ's death on the cross; by the action of bringing one "in wham was sene no syn" to hell, Satan loses those souls. Thus, it is through the Incarnation that Christ beats Satan at his own game, and emerges the arch-trickster of Biblical literature.

Tales of trickery involving Christ and the Devil, the cosmic tricksters, which has been seen at the level of organized Middle English religion, are prominent at

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[35] In the Anglo-Saxon "Gospel of Nicodemus" (see Hulme, "The Old English Gospel of Nicodemus" 579-614) the rood-tree is mentioned (601) as being central to Satan's downfall, which helps to further affirm Ashley's view of the Incarnation as Christ's ultimate trick, but the same emphasis on trickery as Christ's means to defeat Satan is not present in the Anglo-Saxon text.

the level of folklore as well. Often based in Biblical texts or associated tales, these types of tale incorporate religious themes and ideas but place them in more common settings. One collection of such popular tales, re-written in more modern English, is W. C. Hazlitt's Tales and Legends.[36] Several of these tales are worthy of mention. Hazlitt's tale of "The Knight and His Wife" is a tale of the Devil's attempt to deceive a good Christian knight and, foremost, his wife, for whom the Devil has an unholy passion. The knight, in financial need, is promised a pot of gold by the disguised Devil if the knight will only fetch the pot and then return with it and his wife. While returning to the spot where the knight initially met the Devil, the wife wishes to stop at a chapel of the Virgin, enters it and, while praying under a likeness of the Virgin, falls asleep. Our Blessed Lady, out of love for the wife, allows her to rest, assumes her shape, and proceeds with the knight to his meeting. When the knight reaches the meeting-place, Satan remarks:

> Traitor, I bad[e] thee bring thy wife with thee, and in her room thou hast brought Christ's Mother! Hanged shou[l]dest thou be by the neck for thy falsehood!
> (Hazlitt 5)

The Virgin Mary orders the knight to return the gold to Satan and has the knight's own fortune reinstated, whereupon she disappears and, returning to the chapel, he finds his wife asleep and unharmed.

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[36] Hazlitt presents, in contemporary vernacular, a collection of supernatural, feudal, forest, romantic, and humorous folk-tales present in England from the Middle Ages.

An interesting feature of this tale is its adherence to the same principles of the more ritualized Church drama, such as the Second Shepherds' Play. As is found in the Second Shepherds' Play, the knight and his wife are delivered by their goodness. The shepherds discover their property through the kind act of giving the newborn a gift; the knight and his wife are saved by their good nature and, especially, by their devotion to the Virgin shown by the wife's desire to pray at the roadside chapel. This type of adherence is not uncommon in Middle English literature; commenting upon this type of religious tale, Ashley states:

> What is striking about so much of the late medieval vernacular literature is its seemingly effortless fusion of high theological ideas and folk traditions. (134)

Also present in this tale are the themes of the guiler beguiled and an adherence to the abuse-of-power theory whereby the Devil cannot beguile those of no sin; because the Virgin is with the knight, the Devil is powerless to take his soul. A further interesting aspect of this tale is the use of disguise, a motif which is prominent in trickster tales, by both the Devil and the Virgin Mary. Even in disguise, however, Satan can recognize the Virgin for who she is and, thus, leaves empty-handed.[37]

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[37] The Devil was a popular figure in many folk ballads (Wittig 140-1, 212-3). This type of story, in which the Devil has his sights upon another man's wife, was a popular international folk theme (Grant 92), and is seen with an interesting twist in Robert Burns's reworking of an age-old ballad, "Kellyburnbraes." In Burns's story, the Devil successfully captures a man's wife, only to learn her true nature and return her to the man, lamenting that he "ne'er was in h-ll till [he] met wi' a wife" (Burns 646; l. 33).

Another tale of possibly later origin, "The Smith and His Dame," recounts the story of a blacksmith of Egypt who is foolish enough to think that he can duplicate the acts of Jesus. As a demonstration of His abilities, Jesus, disguised as a traveller, places the smith's aging mother-in-law on the forge and strikes her with a hammer, turning her young again. The smith, cunning in his craft, wishes to learn this trick, but the traveller warns him that he cannot, and thus departs. Not believing that this traveller has powers in the craft that he does not, the smith attempts the same thing with his wife; he kills her in the process, however. The man shouts for Jesus to save his wife, whereupon He appears. Jesus demands the man repent his sins and, as the smith repents, Christ blesses the dead wife. The wife rises, praying to Him. In this way, the smith learns that he can have power only in things of this world.

"The Smith and His Dame" (Hazlitt 26-33) shows Christ the trickster in a role which is unlike that he possesses in his confrontation with the Devil. Though he does act in such a way that he instructs the smith in the folly of believing that he could have divine power, this tale also shows Christ using His powers somewhat mischievously, in a way somewhat closer to that of the archetypal tricksters of folk and pagan legend.[38] While the tale of "The Knight and His Wife" adheres closely to the standard religious views of the cosmic tricksters, this

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[38] Ashley also comments on some stories in the "Gospel of Thomas," which recount tales of Christ's infancy and childhood and examine the paradoxes facing one who is both human and divine (132); possibly, aspects of this book are similar to this tale.

character of the cosmic trickster in the tale of "The Smith and His Dame" perhaps receives a greater folk treatment, as it deviates from these typical religious attributes.

In this way, the fool and trickster figures of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English religious literature, while being comparatively similar in these two periods, differ overall from those found in the northern European pagan tradition. Because of dichotomous views present in the Christian tradition, a trickster whose attributes were both good and evil could not be accommodated and, thus, one sees the attributes dichotomized and divided between the cosmic tricksters Christ and Satan, and their agents Adam, Eve, Judith, the shepherds, Mak and Gill. In such works as the "Fall of Man," the "Book of Judith," "The Second Shepherds' Play," and "The Harrowing of Hell," they pit their wits against one another, and the beguiler, Satan, is ultimately beguiled--the forces of good ultimately triumph over those of evil by the Incarnation. This dichotomy is further reflected in the opposition of folly and wisdom as expressed in both Anglo-Saxon wisdom poetry and Middle English writings.

An interesting aspect of this view of folly and the trickster, however, is found in the cases which can be treated only as exceptions to the rule. The Feast of Fools, a ceremony which unifies the pursuit of folly with a view towards God, celebrates folly in what appears to be quite an un-Christian way. Further, the tale of "The Smith and His Dame" shows Christ using His trickster powers in a way more akin to that of Loki's adventures than that of His of Biblical origin. It is

exceptions such as these, and the incorporation of folk elements in religious ceremonies such as seen in the Second Shepherds' Play, which perhaps hint that the more pagan views of folly and trickery were not dead for the Middle English people nor the Anglo-Saxons but, rather, were relegated to the level of folklore and hence did not receive the same amount of literary attention during these periods.

4. From Parzival to Eulenspiegel:

The Middle English Secular Fool and Trickster

The fools and tricksters of Anglo-Saxon literature and the religious writing of the Middle Ages, as have been discussed, do not for the most part have attributes which resemble the characteristics of folly and trickery seen in the character of Loki, who represents the earlier Germanic tradition. This is largely because of a dualistic thought prevalent in Christianity which does not allow for the incorporation of opposing traits in the religious characters of folly and in the cosmic tricksters. However, characters closer to the Middle English folk tradition, which is in many ways quite separate from that of religious literature, often are able to incorporate these opposing attributes. Either by evolving from one extreme to the other or by being able to synthesize the opposite ends of the spectrum, they often show in their exploits the humour and folly which is virtually absent from their counterparts in religious literature.

Examples of these differences can be found in a number of Middle English characters, including Parzival, Tyl Eulenspiegel and Chaucer's characters. The Germanic Christian fool Parzival begins life a fool but, with time and experience, is able to overcome his foolish nature and become the ruler of the Holy Grail. The trickster characters collected in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales often successfully accomplish their varied plots, but occasionally meet with fitting, humorous, and often demeaning punishments for their mischief. Lastly, the

Germanic arch-trickster Tyl Eulenspiegel, known in late Medieval and Renaissance England as Till Owlglass, acts out his tricks not only for gain but for the sake of mischief itself, benefiting from his superior intellect and inherent ability to deceive. All of these secular figures of folly and trickery have, to some degree, elements in their characters which are not present in previous Christian figures of trickery and folly.

It is possible that part of the reason for the differing treatment of the fool and trickster in Middle English literature is the change which the fool was undergoing at the secular level. The later Middle English period and the Renaissance saw the fool transformed from the Christian figure who lacks wisdom and is, thus, damned, to a more comic and complex figure. In The Fool: His Social and Literary History, Enid Welsford defines this new role of the fool, which is akin to his role as perceived by the twentieth century:

> He is a man who falls below the average human standard, but whose defects have been transformed into a source of delight, [he is] a mainspring of comedy . . . (xi)

From a figure of pity, the fool became a character of inspiration and delight, and, as the Middle Ages drew to a close, the character of the fool had seen a rise in status from that of the natural idiot and the epitome of stupidity to that of the court fool whose role was to be jester and performer.[39]

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[39] In her chapter entitled "The Rise of the Fool," Billington chronicles the rise of the fool from the figure of the natural to a position of esteem.

This new importance of the fool is reflected in the popularity of early Renaissance works such as Erasmus' The Praise of Folly (1511), in which the fool exposes her own nature by praising folly as the true wisdom (Welsford, "The Praise of Folly and the Tradition of the Fool" 104), and Barclay's Ship of Fools (1509), which is a mirror-catalogue of figures of folly (Swain 117). However, the folly of these satiric works is still quite akin to that of the Christian view; by praising folly as true wisdom, Folly exposes herself for what she is, and Barclay's catalogue of folly's many faces shows them in many cases to be related to the Devil's own (Pompen 295-7). It is, perhaps, not until Renaissance treatments of the fool, such as those given by Shakespeare, that this view of folly as inspiring delight is more prominent. Until that time, however, one can witness the changes in the character of the fool and his folly alongside those of the trickster and his tricks in Middle English secular literature.

One fool who shows aspects of this changed view is Parzival. The folk tales concerning Parzival, one version of which has been recorded by the German Wolfram von Eschenbach, treat Parzival as a fool in the Christian sense, but also show a digression from the traditional religious treatment of the fool. In von Eschenbach's hands the fool is allowed out of his role and ascends to the position of ultimate wisdom in his world, which is that of the possession of the Grail; he grows from a role of folly to one which has great power. Though discussion will centre on the best known Germanic version of the tale, the story by Wolfram von Eschenbach, the legend of Parzival "is found in the tradition of all the Aryan

people as a folk tale" (Zeydel 6), and rather similar elements of the tale appear in the French Chrétien de Troyes' slightly earlier Conte du Graal,[40] which is seen as a possible source of von Eschenbach's work (Springer 220), and the later English Syr Percyvelle of Galles (Zeydel 5-6) and Malory's Le Morte D'Arthur.[41]

Parzival, whose name means literally "pure fool" and is referred to by Koepping as the "Christian dumb hero" (209), begins his exploits as a fool in a number of ways. When one first meets Parzival, he is described as "træchlîche wîs" (Eschenbach 4; st. 4, l. 18), "slow to wisdom" (Northcott 410); and though his mother explains to him the difference between the Devil and God--"sîn mouter undershiet im gar / daz vinster unt daz lieht gevar"[42] (Eschenbach 101; st. 119, ll. 29-30)--he is still ignorant of religious observances, courtly manners, and the duties of knighthood (Wallace 3). The knights he meets, however, seem quite aware of Parzival's character, or at least his appearance, and refer to him as "tœrsche" (Eschenbach 102; st. 121, l. 5), "fool." When he leaves his mother, she has dressed him as a fool, which reflects his status in the world by his lack of

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40 Springer dates von Eschenbach's Parzival between 1200 and 1212 (220) and notes the influence of Crétien's earlier work (221-2, Frappier 157).

41 A much fuller account of the widespread Arthurian legend can be found in R. S. Loomis Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History.

42 "His mother taught him well to mark / The difference twixt light and dark" (Zeydel 61).

awareness of both the world and of the Lord, whose knowledge is the source of wisdom in this type of Christian tale:

> der liute vil bî spotte sint.
> tôren kleider sol mîn kint
> ob sîme liehten lîbe tragn.
> (Eschenbach 107; st. 126, ll. 25-8)

> For mockery many show a flair:
> Fool's attire my son shall wear
> Upon his body sound and trim. (Zeydel 66)

Thus, dressed as the fool he is, he leaves his mother "in search of experience and his fortune" (Wallace 3).

His journey from this point onward is an educative process in which, step-by-step, he exchanges old ideas for newer knowledge that serves him better. Though he soon dons the garb of a knight, this does not affect his position of fool, for he still wears the fool's clothes underneath his armour. His first lessons outside those given by his mother come from Gurnemanz de Graharz, who instructs him in the ways of knightly behaviour. Parzival's education is not, however, complete, and he leaves his tutor, as Wallace comments, "no longer . . . a natural fool, but a knightly one" (3). Just as Parzival follows his mother's teachings unquestioningly, so too does he adhere to those of Gurnemanz, including a lesson which is crucial to Eschenbach's tale:

> irn sult niht vil gevrâgen:
> ouch sol iuch biht betrâgen
> bedâhter gegenrede, diu gê
> reht als jenes vrâgen stê,
> der iuch wil mit worten spehen.
> (Eschenbach 144; st. 171, ll. 17-21)

From too much questioning refrain,
But proper answer ne'er disdain
When asked, and speak out fairly
To meet all questions squarely
If men would know what sort you be. (Zeydel 88)

When at the Grail Castle, he is in awe of the riches he sees. Though the Grail is passed within his sight and is his only for the asking, Parzival is unaware of this fact. Instead of inquiring about the festivities or the Grail, he holds his tongue, reflecting upon what Gurnemanz has taught him:

er dâhte "mir riet Gurnamanz
mit grôzen triwen âne schranz,
ich solte vil gevrâgen niht."
(Eschenbach 201-2; st. 239, ll. 11-3)

"Prince Gurnemanz admonished me,"
He thought, "in steadfast loyalty
That I should not inquire too much." (Zeydel 126)

By following Gurnemanz's teachings, especially his lesson to refrain from questioning, Parzival ruins his first chance to find the Grail; he is a fool at the Grail Castle because he "adheres to the letter of the law . . . [and] actually 'sins' by following this precept too closely" (Koepping 209).

Realizing to some extent his mistake, the shamed Parzival leaves the Round Table; in this condition, and with Gurnemanz's teachings having failed him, he is ready to accept any advice (Marchand 292; cf. Eschenbach 277; st. 330, ll. 1-6). It is only in his visit with Trevrizent that Parzival's spiritual eyes are finally opened (Norcott 423). Trevrizent orders Parzival, the knightly fool, to take the road that God ordains (Zeydel 199)--"nu genc nâch der gotes kür"

(Eschenbach 382; st. 452, l. 9)--and is thereafter educated in Christian religion and learns the ways of God. With knowledge of God, Parzival is also able to learn of the significance of the Grail and its connection (and his) with the Fisher King; further, he is able to recognize his sin at the Grail Castle (cf. Eschenbach 408; st. 473, ll. 11-9), and to acknowledge its cause:

> sît im sîn tumpheit daz gebôt
> daz er aldâ niht vrâgte,
> grôzer sæide in dô betrâgte.
> (Eschenbach 409; st. 484, ll. 28-30)

> Since his folly was in command
> That question he omitted,
> Great happiness he quitted. (Zeydel 224)

Lastly, with his knowledge and acceptance of Christianity, Parzival is no longer a fool, and may return to the Grail Castle and reign as ruler and master there:

> da ergienc dô dehein ander wal,
> wan die diu schrift ame grâl
> hete ze hêrren in benant:
> Parzivâl wart schiere bekant
> ze künige unt ze hêrren dâ.
> (Eschenbach 673; st. 796, ll. 17-21)

> That man was now elected
> By Grail inscription directed
> To be ruler o'er the Grail:
> Parzival must now prevail
> As ruler and as master there. (Zeydel 328)

In this way, Parzival is not condemned by his folly but, rather, is able to rise through the ranks of folly to finally obtain wisdom and, in possession of wisdom, is

able to take the position of power ascribed to him in the first place, that of the King of the Grail.

Another interesting aspect of Parzival's change is noted by James Wallace, who places Parzival's ascent to the Grail in the realm of the Tarot card. According to Wallace, the Tarot card of the Fool, numbered zero, "is placed just before the first card, that of the Magician, indicating the state of ignorance prior to the beginning of [his] initiation into the mysteries" of existence (3). The Fool's story, that of Dionysus, is closely connected with that of Parzival for, born ignorant, the Fool searches for experience and, after he gains proper experience, becomes the Magician. Just as the Fool of the Tarot goes from a position of folly to one of wisdom and experience, Parzival evolves from a fool to a king. Though important for many reasons, the Tarot is relevant here in that it shows, as does the tale of Parzival, the ability of the Fool to rise from his state of ignorance to one of experience. Though the fool is still Christian in the sense that his folly is wholly devoid of wisdom, his position is not one which is fixed, and he may incorporate aspects of wisdom with his folly and eventually triumph over folly itself to become wise.

Though the character of the fool as seen in Parzival does not deviate unrecognizably from the same character of Christian folly, he is somewhat different in that he, over time, manages to move from one end of the wisdom/folly spectrum to the other. In the secular literature of the Middle Ages, also, the trickster figures do seem to be less like those of the religious literature,

and some seem more akin to those of the Germanic pagan tradition as seen in the character of Loki. In the ribald short verse stories of trickery, the fabliaux, collected in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, primarily those of the Miller and the Pardoner, aspects unlike those of the Christian trickster are presented.

While at first glance most of the characters of Chaucer's band of pilgrims are quite unlike that which their roles might be expected to excite, including that of the Pardoner, "The Pardoner's Tale" of trickery and deception is perhaps most closely alike those of the cosmic tricksters because of its moral and religious overtones; yet there are noticeable differences between the more Christian tales and the Pardoner's story. While there are no true figures of good in the tale, the figures of evil are quite clearly marked; they are the three "riotoures" (Chaucer 198; l. 661), "revellers" or "loose-livers," seated early in the morning in the tavern drinking. Though the initial intention of the three to hunt down and kill the evil character of Death could loosely be considered a noble pursuit, they are foolish in the first place to think that Death can be caught and dealt with in the manner they propose. Furthermore, once they find Death's gold, they no longer think of dealing with Death--"Ne lenger thanne after Deeth they soughte" (Chaucer 200; l. 772)--but, rather, turn their attentions to greed, and to consideration of how to divide the gold. By conspiring to keep the gold, two plot to kill the third and keep his share, and the third rogue, influenced by the Devil, decides to poison the other two:

And atte laste the feend oure enemy

Putte in his thought that he sholde poison beye,
With which he myghte sleen his felawes tweye.
(Chaucer 201; ll. 844-6)

Interestingly, "The Pardoner's Tale" incorporates current theological beliefs of the Devil's power over the souls of men; the Devil has the right to tempt the third because of the life he has led:

Forwhy the feend foond him in swich licinge
That he hadde leve him to sorwe bringe.
(Chaucer 201; ll. 847-8)

Considering, however, the narrator of the story, its religious aspects are quite as could be expected. Also, as is congruent with Augustine's statement that "men who desire evil things are subjected to illusion and deception as a reward for their desires" (Augustine 58), each group falls into the wicked plot of the other, beginning with the two against the third rogue. Once they have done their deed, they fall into his trap:

For right as they hadde cast his deeth bifoore,
Right so they han hym slayn, and that anon.
And whan that this was doon, thus spak that oon:
"Now lat us sitte and drynk and make us merie,
And afterward we wol his body berie."
And with that word it happed hym, par cas,
To take the botel ther the poyson was,
And drank, and yaf his felawe drynke also,
For which anon they storven bothe two.
(Chaucer 201; ll. 878-89)

In this way, the three do actually find Death, but it is by trying to out-trick each other; though one of the rogues is definitely going to hell, it is quite certain that the other two will join him there as well. Thus, one sees again a common theme

of Middle English trickster literature, as is also seen in the Second Shepherds' Play, that of the guiler beguiled. Also similar to one aspect of the Second Shepherds' Play is the element of cosmic justice in "The Pardoner's Tale," seen in the handling of the rogues. This tale, however, does not contain any characters of good trickery to oversee the events and ensure their evil ends; rather, the evil fools secure their own just ends.

While there are no episodes of hilarious folly, there is a type of humour present in "The Pardoner's Tale"; a certain comic reaffirmation is seen in the downfall of evil which shows the world to be a just place, and a certain humour is associated with watching forces of evil undo themselves by their own means. Chaucer's tales, however, also show the blatantly humorous and, often, more base sides of trickery and folly.

Such a story is "The Miller's Tale," which deserves a short paraphrase. Nicholas, the boarder of a very jealous carpenter, hatches a plot to spend the night with the carpenter's young, attractive, and quite willing wife:

> . . . Nicholas shal shapen hym a wyle
> This sely jalous housbonde to bigyle,
> And if so be the game wente aright,
> She sholde slepen in his arm al nyght--
> For this was his desir and hire also.
> (Chaucer 71; ll. 3403-7)

He tells the carpenter that a second, shorter flood is coming, and that preparations must be made to ensure their safety. Convinced, the carpenter acts on this advice and hangs three tubs in the rafters, one for each of them; he gives

each a separate access. That evening, the three climb into their separate tubs and, when the tired carpenter falls immediately asleep, Nicholas and the wife climb down their ladders to spend the night together.

Thus far, the trick is successful; however, disaster is imminent as the second and third tricks, played respectively by the wife and Nicholas against an admirer of the wife's coming for a morning kiss, have the admirer kissing her bottom and, shortly thereafter, prodding Nicholas in his rear with a hot poker. Nicholas' cry for water to cool his poked bottom is heard by the carpenter who, believing the flood is upon them, releases himself and his tub. Instead of finding water and floating, they crash down to the cellar; and Nicholas' plot thus shows the carpenter to be mad. This way, says the Miller, is how the scholar proves the carpenter a fool--"How that a clerk hath set the wrightes cappe" (Chaucer 67; l. 3143)--and how the story ends:

> Thus swyved was the carpenteris wyf
> For al his kepyng and his jalousye,
> And Absolon hath kist hir nether ye,
> And Nicholas is scalded in the towte.
> (Chaucer 77; ll. 3850-3)

Save perhaps for evil allusions cast by the scholar's name,[43] there are certainly no cosmic tricksters in "The Miller's Tale." The tale also lacks an overall sense of cosmic justice which is present in the religious tales taken as a

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[43] The Oxford English Dictionary ("Nick" 391) and Eric Partridge ("Nick" 559), in his Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional Language, both state explicitly the connected connotations of the name Nicholas, or Nick, and the Devil. Partridge also comments that St. Nicholas is the "patron saint of scholars and thieves" (559).

whole and, specifically, in "The Pardoner's Tale," for the carpenter and admirer are quite unjustly used by the scholar and the carpenter's wife. Furthermore, the trickster characters of Nicholas and the wife are not concerned with forces of good or evil in their guile; this is seen by the facts that the carpenter is convinced largely because Nicholas takes advantage of his belief in the gospels, and the admirer of the wife is a man of the Church.

Also present in "The Miller's Tale" is a type of mischievousness and folly which is lacking in the other tales. Regardless of the religious overtones, it is humorous to listen to Nicholas deceive the carpenter with talk of the flood, which is to be more than twice as severe as Noah's[44] and will come one evening and yet abate by nine the next day. Nicholas' deception here goes unpunished, but perhaps it is also ironically fitting and, thus, humorous, that the carpenter receives the ultimate punishment for his jealousy--the knowledge that it was not unfounded in the first place. Furthermore, the deeds done to the admirer are doubly revenged on Nicholas in an extremely demeaning yet fitting and humorous way. By wishing to play just one more trick, Nicholas the guiler receives a prod in a area of close proximity to that of his initial sin; this is certainly as appropriate as Loki's punishment for false talk with Eitri, the dwarf, by having his mouth sewn shut.

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[44] Chaucer (72; ll. 3513-8). Lines 3516-18 read:

> That now a Monday next, at quarter night,
> Shal falle a rain, and that so wilde and wood,
> That half so greet was nevere Noees flood.

Similar elements of base, humorous folly and fitting punishment are combined in other Middle English trickster tales. Consider Chaucer's "The Reeve's Tale," where the students cheated in a business deal with the miller enjoy the pleasures of his chaste daughter and wife. Strikingly similar is the tale of "The Miller of Abingdon," retold in Hazlitt's Tales and Legends, in which the same events are recounted. Others in Hazlitt's collection, such as "The King and the Tanner," contain figures still more closely allied with the folk tricksters of Chaucer than with the cosmic tricksters of Middle English religious literature. However, it is the Germanic folk hero and arch-trickster Tyl Eulenspiegel, also known as Till Owlglass, who appears quite different from the cosmic trickster figures and thus closer to a character of pure trickery and folly.

In his preface to a modern English edition of Eulenspiegel's exploits, Kenneth Mackenzie places Eulenspiegel in the context of the new European tradition of folly, relating the publication of Tyl's tales to the works of Brant and Erasmus. He comments on Eulenspiegel's prominence in comparison to them, in that all works were based upon a similar principle:

> . . . the same principle of satirising mankind with ridicule so general, that every man should feel more pleasure from the humiliation of his neighbours than pain from his own.[45]
> (Mackenzie xxiii).

He goes on to say that, unlike Erasmus, Brant and Eulenspiegel both targeted humanity in general; yet "while Brant is now scarce remembered, Eulenspiegel

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[45] Mackenzie states that his translation is derived from the early Low German text.

remains, a striking and applicable book" (Mackenzie xxiv). Thus, the influence of this trickster is quite wide, as can also be seen by the history which surrounds his character and the repeated publication of his stories. Eulenspiegel is said to have been a real character, born in the Brunswick area of Germany in the late thirteenth century and dying of the plague in Mölln in 1350 (Michaelis-Jena 101). The first known written collection of his exploits appears in the Low German text of 1519. Since then, his tales have been translated and printed hundreds of times, and William Copeland's English edition (ca. 1528) was very popular in the English countryside (Mackenzie xxvii, 284). Since then, Eulenspiegel has gained a large following; Michaelis-Jena cites large pilgrimages to what is held to be Eulenspiegel's tomb (102), and even in English there are a large number of picture-books aimed at toddlers which outline his merry pranks.[46]

Tyl's large following is one shared by many figures of his type--the English Robin Hood is another such character (cf. Hazlitt, "Robin Hood" 242-323)--for he is a character who acts as a symbol of "retaliation of the underprivileged against their superiors in wealth or learning" (Briggs 4), much like Loki, who is a symbol of defiance among the Germanic gods and whose plots often show him working against the Æsir. Such is the case when, caught for thievery, Eulenspiegel faces the punishment of hanging; by convincing the governing council that he can

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[46] To name several of these, I include Tyll Ulenspiegel's Merry Pranks (M. Jagendorf [New York: Vanguard Press, 1938]), The Wicked Tricks of Tyl Uilenspiegel (Jay Williams [New York: Four Winds Press, 1978]), Till Eulenspiegel the Clown (Erich Kastner [New York: Julian Messner, 1957]).

save the town money by hanging himself for the charge of only a single crown, however, he is left alone to do so, and thus escapes punishment[47] (Mackenzie 167-8). The reader sees Eulenspiegel as a doctor and a dentist and, quite humorously, among some of the most learned men of his time, proclaiming himself to be a master of all languages, save Spanish[48] (Mackenzie 193-6). As he is examined by the intellectuals, consistently failing to recognize the languages spoken unto him, he claims they are like Spanish and calls upon their moral senses for them to agree with him; Latin, related linguistically to Spanish, is "a great shame unto the Christian world, that yet should in Spain such vile unbelievers be as the Moors and their black king" (Mackenzie 195); Greek, the language of "idol-worshippers" (Mackenzie 195), is like Spanish in that it does not belong on the tongue of any good Christian. Italian, French, and English Tyl treats similarly, much to the praise of his inquisitors, and when he acclaims the German tongue as being the best and most useful, he is successfully acclaimed a master of languages:

> And the assembly had great content with Owlglass; for they perceived, that truly he was a master of languages, and understood not the words so much as the intent, and that he judged of the lands by the tongues used by the inhabitants thereof. For truly, my masters, all languages are like each unto the other; for in every one will ye find liars, cozeners, knaves, cutpurses,

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47 "The Sixty and Third Adventure: How that Owlglass 'scaped hanging by his cunning, and would have hanged himself for a crown, yet he did not."

48 "The Seventy and Third Adventure: How that at Griefswald good Master Owlglass came unto the Rector of the University, and proclaimed himself to be a master in all languages, save in one only, to wit, the Spanish tongue."

> deceivers, and beguilers, in number a great multitude. So with honour departed Owlglass. (Mackenzie 196)

In tales such as these, Eulenspiegel triumphs over figures of authority with ease, benefiting from his ultimately superior intellect, or at least from the foolishness of his adversaries, and his own inherent ability to deceive. He tricks the high, the low, the good, and the evil without discrimination. In one adventure which has many direct parallels to Chaucer's "The Friar's Tale,"[49] Eulenspiegel is a tax collector and meets with the Devil (Mackenzie 260-3). Unlike the summoner of "The Friar's Tale," however, Tyl manages to escape the Devil's clutches, though he renounces his ways of trickery for a brief time. Shortly thereafter, Eulenspiegel is on his deathbed, but still musters the creative energy to teach a greedy priest a lesson.[50]

Even in death, Eulenspiegel the arch-trickster is crafty enough never to be caught as the result of his activities and face serious consequences. Though some do call him a Devil figure[51] and, in legend, he is mentioned to have "fellowship

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49 "The Hundred and First Adventure: How in Berlin Owlglass was an officer, and collected taxes of the boors."

50 Mackenzie (270-2). "The Hundred and Fifth Adventure: Saith, How that to a greedy priest Owlglass confessed his sins, and paid him handsomely for his pains."

51 Blamires talks especially of Bernt Hucker's theory (yet to be published) of Eulenspiegel as a Devil-figure, but refutes the hypothesis (358).

with Saint Nicholas"[52] (Mackenzie 276), the Cardinal of his region is said to have written to Rome asking for and receiving Eulenspiegel's sainthood; then, according to legend, he was made a saint "bear[ing] rule over all manner of chousings, beguilings, cozenings, cheatings, and knaveries" (Mackenzie 276), and given his day of April 1, the Fool's day.[53]

In the tales of Tyl Eulenspiegel, thus, one finds trickery for its own sake, allied with neither good nor evil and consistently mocking both. Moreover, his treatment is far more secular than those tricksters of previous discussion, and his stories are those of folk-roguery. Though it is doubtful that he ever did exist as the character one finds in the stories (Welsford, The Fool 43), this is unimportant; it is his role as trickster which makes him a strong figure of Middle English secular literature. He shares the attributes of the Tarot fool in that he is a wanderer in search of experience and, thus, also shares the attributes of the wanderer characters seen in the Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse poems "Hávamál" and the "Wanderer." However, while he never grows to attain a position like that

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[52] Partridge states that St. Nicholas was a reference to the Devil and was so common by the late sixteenth century that it was "verging on S[tandard] E[nglish]" (559). Consider also the relationship between the sainted Eulenspiegel, who presides over tricksters, cheaters, and cozeners, and St. Nicholas, who is the patron saint of scholars and thieves (559).

[53] The Encyclopedia Britannica (1.496) talks of April Fools' Day as being "named from the custom of playing practical jokes or sending friends on fools' errands on that date" and notes that it "has been observed for centuries in several countries" and is similar to other festivals of folly in other countries. Surely, considering Eulenspiegel's alleged exploits, this is a day which commemorates all that he stands for.

of the latter Parzival or Oðin, his keen folly is wisdom enough to beguile his victims, the weak and powerful alike, and to obtain him apparent sainthood and rule over all fools.

Eulenspiegel thus has attributes associated with his character not seen in previous Christian figures of trickery and folly but, rather, in the figures of pagan mythology, especially Loki. Eulenspiegel points out the paradoxes of all mankind, exposing them for the purpose of laughter, and does not hesitate to incorporate figures of authority in his jests and guile, including ones as high as the Pope.[54] This character, whose folly is pure wisdom, is one of the first widely popular characters to play at being a professional buffoon (Zijderveld 84) and, of the fools and tricksters discussed so far, Eulenspiegel is perhaps closest to his counterparts seen in the plays of Shakespeare (Mackenzie xxvi).

From the religious and moralistic overtones of trickery in "The Pardoner's Tale" to the pure lust and folly of "The Miller's Tale," secular figures of trickery and folly in the Middle English period are generally quite different from those found in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English religious literature. Within the Christian dichotomy of wisdom and folly, the ultimate fool Parzival is allowed to rise from his position and to reach that of the possessor of the Grail, one of ultimate wisdom. Unlike Eve, he is not made to face the same evil deceptions; the only real trick he faces is his own folly, which he is allowed, eventually, to

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[54] Mackenzie, (119-121). "The Forty and First Adventure: How that Owlglass journeyed unto Rome to see the Pope, and how his Holiness considered that Owlglass was an heretic."

overcome. Outside the ideals of Christian dichotomized thinking, the figure of Eulenspiegel is allowed to rise and dominate folly and trickery without being a figure solidly good or evil. Eulenspiegel is not "the spirit which denies"[55] and brings destruction but, rather, is a spirit of jest and folly, strange wisdom and eloquence, and, ultimately, a comic figure of fascination.

For these reasons, the Middle English fool and trickster figures, chiefly seen in the character of Eulenspiegel, differ from the tradition of the fool and trickster established by Christian writings and, at least to some degree, are more reminiscent of figures like the pagan god Loki, who incorporated elements of wisdom and folly and good and evil. Like Loki, Eulenspiegel bridges the dichotomized positions of good and evil and unites the attributes of trickery and folly; he exists for the reader as he did for the tellers of folk tales in the Middle English period as a character of laughable duality.

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[55] Goethe, Faust 1.164 (Cf. fn. 9).

Conclusion: The Folly and Trickery of Shakespeare's Feste

Figures of folly and trickery in English literature have undergone a great deal of change in their evolution from mythological origins, through their representation in English writing dominated by religion, and, finally, to their more secular forms of the latter Middle English period. While a figure such as Loki is able to house opposing characteristics which make him a creative and successful trickster of humorous, laughter-inspiring tales, he also serves in the role of destroyer, bringing apocalypse to the realm of the gods. In the Medieval writings of a religious nature, however, the opposing characteristics found in the figure of Loki are divided among the forces of good and evil trickery, primarily Christ and Satan. Similarly, the folly which is absent from the tales of the cosmic tricksters is diametrically opposed to wisdom; the fool is generally not, for those of this period, a figure of laughter and revelry but, rather, is a figure to be pitied, for he lacks the wisdom necessary to find God and his way to heaven.

While the fool and trickster appear comparatively unrelated in their early appearances, these figures do share some larger similarities which are increasingly apparent in their later Medieval manifestations. From the figures which are the focal points of this discussion, several specific traits of both the fool and the trickster figure can be discerned. Especially noticeable in the characters of the fool and the trickster, excluding of those of the Christian tradition, is a type of duality associated with each; generally, they are able to combine opposites such as

wisdom/folly and good/evil within their personalities. The Christian figures' numerous similarities to the more secular tricksters and fools makes Christian figures' inability to incorporate internally opposite characteristics, as a function of their place in a larger Dualistic structure, a noticeable feature of their personalities.

In either case, the incorporation of opposite characteristics (which is either accepted or rejected), coupled with some other potentially dangerous characteristics, make fools and tricksters magical figures but also characters potentially dangerous both to themselves and to those around them. One such characteristic, the ability to manipulate and invert logic through an expert command of language and mind, is seen in many characters, including Loki, Satan, Christ, the "Miller's Tale's" Nicholas, and Eulenspiegel; and in Satan's hands, Eve leads the fall of man. Satan as the serpent, Loki as Svaðilfari's mate, and Christ, as a man, all make use of disguise or shape-shifting to conceal their identity while performing their acts of trickery. Lastly, in the cases of Parzival, Eulenspiegel, the latter Loki, and the fool who opposes wisdom, their ability to exist outside standard societal constraints gives them a relatively free reign in their words and deeds.

A further concern in the discussion of the often similar role of the fool and the trickster is the critical assumption held by some that the character of the fool is simply an evolution of the earlier trickster figure. One such critic, Klaus-Peter Koepping, comments in this vein that the trickster is a mythological figure, while

the fool as he appears in literature is a "deritualized and more secularized" version of the trickster (193-4). While it is possible that one figure evolved from the other, in the history preceding the creation of fool and trickster characters in both W. S. Gilbert's The Yeoman of the Guard and Shakespeare's Twelfth Night it appears evident that at least the two figures have evolved from somewhat common origins to positions where they share basic characteristics within and beyond the traits for which they were initially and primarily known. The tribal trickster of Teutonic mythology, Loki, while a master of disguise and deceit for both good and evil purposes, is also a corrupter of words. In Anglo-Saxon and Medieval religious literature, Christ, a figure of wisdom, defeats the guiler Satan largely because of Satan's folly in not being able to recognize the futility of struggle against the true and all-powerful wisdom of God. Folk tales of the Middle Ages also house many tricksters and fools, some of whom, like the Germanic folk hero Tyl Eulenspiegel actively incorporate and equally employ attributes of both the fool and the trickster.

The roots of folly and trickery run deep, and are at least loosely connected, if not inherently linked; as Williams notes, "One thing is clear: the fool, whoever and wherever he is, is not merely foolish, and the trickster does more than trick" (2). He further states, in this vein,

> Their roles in society on the surface may appear to be different but in fact there are distinct similarities. Some of these similarities are based mainly upon appearances; others go much deeper than this. . . . The curious thing is that the fool figure in early and modern literature, . . . the folkloric fool,

> and the tribal trickster, if not exactly the same animal, all show signs of belonging to the same species. (1)

It is elements from these Teutonic, Anglo-Saxon, and Middle English roots which ultimately find their way into Shakespeare's fool and trickster characters, and are especially prominent in Twelfth Night's Feste. After viewing the fool as the hero and governor of the Medieval Feast of Fools, reading of the fool Parzival ascending to his final position of governing the Grail, and seeing the trickster Eulenspiegel sainted and given April Fools' Day, it is not surprising to see the fool and trickster, Feste, presented by Shakespeare to rule over the festivities of the Twelfth Night. Just as the Lord of Misrule and Abbot of Unreason, whose names generally denote accurately their governing abilities, act as masters of ceremony for the twelve days of Christmas in age-old British custom (Baker 9, 45), so too does Feste preside over the folly and trickery of Shakespeare's play.

Often possessing keener powers than the rest of Twelfth Night's society, the wise-fool Feste has an intellectual prowess in certain areas which is second to none. The character of Feste illuminates the relationship of folly and trickery as seen by Renaissance audiences. Like Loki and Eulenspiegel, Feste often plays a dangerous role; and, at times, all three characters find their inclination towards folly and trickery a mixed blessing. Far from possessing attributes dichotomized as with the cosmic tricksters and religious fools, Feste the fool is, like Loki and Eulenspiegel, a character of duality; he is both a fool and a wise man, is aligned

equally with chaos and order, and is quite active in promoting these mixed aspects of his character. He acts as the voice of vice, as in the song he sings to Malvolio:

> I am gone, sir,
> And anon, sir,
> I'll be with you again,
> In a trice,
> Like to the old Vice,
> Your Need to sustain.
> Who with Dagger of lath,
> In his rage and his wrath,
> Cries "Ah ha" to the devil.
> Like a mad lad,
> "Pare thy nails, dad."
> Adieu, goodman devil.
> (Shakespeare 4.2.117-128)

He also acts with the cause of virtue, as when he refuses Fabian access to the letter he carries from Malvolio to Olivia (5.1). Though his actions may be at times for opposite ends, he works towards both extremes with the tools of his trade: folly and trickery. Even Feste's virtuous action, which denies Fabian access to Malvolio's letter and eliminates further deception at Malvolio's expense, is carried out by tricking Fabian into not asking for the letter:

> Fabian: Now as thou lov'st me, let me see this letter.
> Clown: Good Master Fabian, grant me another request.
> Fabian: Anything.
> Clown: Do not desire to see this letter.
> Fabian: This is to give a dog and in recompense desire my dog again. (5.1.1-6)

Like Loki, Eulenspiegel, Mak and Gill, and Satan, Feste plays an active part in adding turmoil to situations, concentrating less on order and seemingly advocating chaos, as his position as the "Abbot of Unreason" might dictate. Unlike the

more diabolical tricksters, however, Feste is able to act in a constructive way as well, and also assists in moving the societal spirit of Twelfth Night towards order and social reconciliation, thus assisting directly in the play's comic resolution.

Like Eulenspiegel, Feste brings apparent chaos to the order of language, makes apparent babble out of sense, and, while convincing those around him that his folly is true wisdom, also shows that his guile is pure grace. These last aspects of Feste's character are quite like those expected of the fool as he is perceived today. Though his roots in the Medieval Christian figure which opposed wisdom are still present in the fool's orientation towards babble and silliness, his more modern form, beginning with the late Medieval secular figures of folly and trickery, shows a character far more complex. The union of the trickster's attributes with those of the fool, as commented upon by Koepping and Williams, is an aspect of this evolution which is quite important to notice, largely because it occurs within this Medieval era which contains very different fool and trickster types; consider that while Christ and Eulenspiegel are both tricksters, Christ has no attributes of folly and would be diminished by the possession of any, and Eulenspiegel's character would be extremely compromised without the folly and laughter which surround his tricks.

Even in their differing states, however, the figures of the fool and trickster generally remain recognizable. They are, thus, relatively constant fixtures of the past and likely will be so in the future as well. Truly, both figures are archetypes, as stated by Jung of the trickster alone, and take their places as Lords of Misrule,

Abbots of Unreason, and ambassadors of laughter alongside the Saviours and the Devils of literature and society--all time-honoured culture heroes.

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